# THE FAITH OF THE ARTIST



JAMES H. COUSINS

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

wholly or partly on the arts

---

THE RENAISSANCE IN INDIA

NEW WAYS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

MODERN ENGLISH POETRY: ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND TENDENCIES

THE NEW JAPAN

SAMADARSANA (SYNTHETIC VISION)

WORK AND WORSHIP (ESSAYS ON CULTURE AND CREATIVE ART)

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEAUTY

THE PLAY OF BRAHMA (DRAMA IN NATIONAL REVIVAL)

A STUDY IN SYNTHESIS

# THE FAITH OF THE ARTIST

ESSAYS

By

JAMES H. COUSINS

1941

KALAKSHETRA • ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA

Printed by C. Subbarayudu, at the Vasanta Press, Adyar, Madras

# PREFATORY NOTE

THE essays and lectures selected for this book express, though not chronologically, various aspects of my thought on a matter which has been central in my consciousness since boyhood—the matter of the nature of the art-impulse in myself and others, and its relationship to the individual and general life, the latter including the interactions of nations.

The book does not contain all that I have written or spoken on the subject. *Work and Worship* (1922) related the principle of culture in human history with its special demonstration in the arts and their part in education. *A Study in Synthesis* (1934) put the arts in their place as an essential sub-synthesis (the creative synthesis) in the inclusive synthesis of human endowment; the others being, the aspirational synthesis (religion), the contemplative synthesis (philosophy), the observative synthesis (science), the associative synthesis (social civilisation), and the educational synthesis through which the others are approached.

The essays presented here are, however, mainly of later date than the synthetical study. They have, I would hope, not only attained the increased clarity of expression that comes of increased assurance in the contemplation of a subject, but have, I would also hope, an indication of the enlarged knowledge and deeper understanding that should, in the growth of a writer, pass beyond emotional enthusiasm, and its natural tendency to create congenial errors, into the tested conviction in which thought and feeling interact in mutually helpful unanimity.

The title-chapter of the book, "The Faith of the Artist" (that is to say, of all artists in all forms of art), was written by request as a paper for a conference on world-faiths held in Madras. Strictly speaking the chapter is the climax of the book if read in reverse order, from the scholastic and argumentative aspect of the subject, through the objective and

practical, to the occult and spiritual. Chapter VI, "Individuality, Nationality and Internationality in Art," was delivered as one of a course of three lectures under the Extension Department of the Osmania University, Hyderabad, which published them as a transaction, from which this chapter has been taken and slightly modified for wider circulation. Chapter VII, "Practical Art," was given as a broadcast from the Madras Station of the All-India Radio. Chapters X, XI, and XII, were delivered as a three-lecture course under the Miller Foundation of the University of Madras. The permission of those concerned to include the above-mentioned chapters in this book is acknowledged with thanks. The other chapters have appeared in magazines in India and America.

I am not without hope that a book of this kind, even in the intensifying crisis of humanity's (shall I say inhumanity's ?) most extensive and most destructive demonstration of the reverse of the creative arts, may perform its own war-service, inconspicuous in circumstances of mortal struggle for national existence and cherished ideals, but of value (a value which I am convinced is fundamental) in uncovering certain sections of the foundations on which peace, when it comes, must, if it is to remain, be built.

JAMES H. COUSINS

The Nilgiris, India,
*April, 1941*

# CONTENTS

Dedicated to
SRIMATI RUKMINI DEVI

# THE FAITH OF THE ARTIST

CHAPTER I

# THE FAITH OF THE ARTIST

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," said Paul the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews (xi 1). A marginal note indicates the flexibility of the translation by giving the words "ground or confidence" as alternatives for "substance." The faith of the artist, therefore, according to this long accepted definition of faith, is the ground or confidence of the things he hopes for in his artistic achievements.

In another Epistle, that to the Romans (viii 24-25), the same Apostle lets us deeper into his thought in the assertion that "we are saved by hope,"—the hope of which faith is the substance; and he expresses the spiritual dynamic of hope, its perpetual pull on the aspiration of humanity towards something beyond the horizon of immediate attainment, in the assertion that "hope that is attained is not hope"—which is the same thing as saying that when you have satisfied your hunger you have lost the spur of being hungry.

These definitions are quoted not simply as utterances of accepted scriptural authority, but as notable expressions of demonstrable truth. Apart from their value in

religious exposition, they are excellent psychology. They bring into psychological unity the inward and outward directions of one phase of the human psyche : faith, the inner assurance, the substantial experiential ground, of hope ; hope, the outward and visible movement towards a desired end which is only truly attained when it is the point of departure for "an end that aye recedes," as George Meredith chants in his " Hymn to Colour."

In every action of life, small or great, faith and hope are inextricably blended. We move towards a desired end by means of coordinated activities that take their separate and conjoint capabilities for granted : that ink will continue to flow, paper to retain applied colour, language to mean something, and the mind to shape and order thought. These—and other matters like the retention of its more or less horizontal position by a table, and of solidity by the earth—enter into the dynamic hope that the writer of these words is exercising in the direction of building out of symbols placed on paper an invisible edifice of thought ; and not one edifice only, but many replicas in minds that share the writer's hope, and rest their hope on the faith-ground that sight will continue to see, and understanding to understand. Our activities are our hopes incarnate. We assume the validity and continuity of a score of mysteries by faith, by the evidence distilled from a myriad of forgotten experiences. Faith and hope are the subjective and objective directions of the intuition.

But hope is not exhausted in action. It is redemptive in its effect. " For we are saved by hope," wrote the

Apostle; and by this salvation he meant any or all of the interpretations of the salvaging processes on which a million sermons have been preached—ultimate and never-ending felicity in heaven; escape from the damning results of sin; deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the body.

True action, action that is deliberate, action carried forward through hope by faith, has within itself the capacity of distilling experience into a power that will enable the real self of the individual to attain liberation. This is precisely the power that the wisdom of India recognised as inherent in the highest form of human action, that is, creative expression; for it is set down in the scripture of Hindu art known as the *Vishnudharmottaram* that one of the functions of a work of art is to enable the observer to attain liberation (*moksha*), the liberation of the inner self from the allurements and enslavements of its external capacities and their characteristic desires.

Behind the liberating work of art—the artist's realised hope based on his faith—stands the artist without whom it could not exist. But it is necessary to consider what manner of being an artist is, in order to understand the faith of the artist—the ground or substance of his action as an artist, not his creed, religious or æsthetical.

In the general mind, out of which dictionaries are compiled, an artist is a practitioner of any fine art. If that were all, then the painters of certain pictures, and the writers of certain books, and the producers of certain talking-pictures, should be canonised as liberators of their

fellows from the bondage of their lower selves. But they are not so canonised, despite the large areas of newspapers devoted to them. Last night's "stars" will be forgotten in the light of the stars of next week, because the senses to which they appeal are not gifted with continuity or memory. These capacities belong to the spirit; and it is only spiritual achievement that can count on canonisation and longevity.

To be a practitioner of an art is not necessarily to be an artist, any more than to practise thinking is to be a philosopher, or to practise speech is to be a poet. A secondary dictionary definition—"one who makes his craft a fine art"—is in fact the primary characteristic of the artist: an individual who, whatever be the medium of expression of his hope, makes it the means of his own salvation, and inevitably of the salvation of others; that is, puts upon the gross exterior act the fine-art quality of ennobling, purifying, and liberating beauty.

This is the type of art which the wise one of old in India, referred to above, had in mind as a means to liberation. But it implied the expression of an equal quality in the artist himself; and that quality was sought in the Indian art canons *(silpa sastras)* to be evoked, fixed, expanded, in the artist's own nature by an attitude of reverence to his work, and of aspiration towards the highest which called for the disciplining of the lower powers of his endowment.

The reverence here spoken of is no sentimental solemnity regarded as the proper attitude towards a theological conception. Commendable as that attitude

may be, it is inadequate. The artist's reverence arises out of the realisation, through the practice of his creative calling, of the colossal weight of significance that rests as lightly as the breast feathers of a dove on the most insignificant of acts ; the realisation of the profound depths of experience that justify themselves by supporting the minute perfection of an instant's illumination or inspiration, as the vast ocean supports the momentary perfection of the microscopic foraminifera ; the realisation, also, that the terms largeness and smallness are false in so far as they suggest separateness. The ultimate realisation of the creative artist is that his faith, which is another term for illumination through experience, and his hope, which is a synonym for his creative activity, are not philosophical or theological abstractions, but his personal, distinctive participation in the Life that animates all lives.

An article of faith of the artist whom the modern spectacle of lost faith confronts, is that creative art is now the only possible restorer of lost faith. A revival of dogmatic religion will not effect the restoration, since advancing knowledge has dug the theological ground from under the feet of the man-in-the-street. The spread of science or philosophy will not do it, for no partial reflection of reality either through observation or contemplation alone can take the place of the living experience of inner illumination and outer realisation. But creative activity in the arts puts the whole nature of the artist in vital touch with the wholeness of the universal life, not with knowledge or thought only, which are derivatives of life, but with life itself : coming, growth, subsidence.

How far the non-artistic mind can recede from the wholeness of life is seen in a statement made in an article in a London magazine some short time ago (1938) by one of the industrial leaders of England. His reading of the significance of human history is this: "From the dawn of history, all human conflict and effort can be traced to a desire for greater real or implied riches that would provide greater comfort in the shape of better food, better clothes, more easily cultivated land, or more easily obtained sensual satisfaction." The argument is that this is the whole history of mankind, and the implication is that it is the kind of history man should go on making.

Sir James Jeans, seeking with imagination among cosmic mechanics for clues to the meaning of life by a wider and deeper study than that of the externals of history, has said in his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, that "the laws which nature obeys are less suggestive of those which a machine obeys in its motion than of those which a musician obeys in writing a fugue or a poet in composing a sonnet."

The mechanistic or non-artistic view of life, whose recent passing the astronomer notes, arose from an inadequate response to life on the part of those who formulated it; a response of science that was rigidly scientific, therefore on the way to error instead of truth; for the full significance of the sphere of truth cannot be encompassed by any mere line upon its surface, however accurate it may be as in science, or logical as in philosophy. Religion might have made a better show in front of science and

philosophy (that is, rationalist philosophy), had it not allowed the same inadequacy to drive it into disagreements. Religious disagreement, however emotionally it is expressed, is mental in origin ; that is, it arises out of reactions that become fixations in consciousness, and establishes and elaborates itself through the peculiar habit of humanity of identifying statements or personifications of truth with truth itself. No artist, least of all the Cosmic Musician-Poet that Jeans visualises, can look upon any of his " creations " as his last word. He lives in his next word, or the word after the next. His musical or verbal phrase is only made intelligible through the phrase that follows it, as it itself was made intelligible through the phrase that preceded it—and so on backwards, and so on forwards.

But the movement of life, the movement that makes fixity the great heresy, is not merely linear. Figured as music, it has both harmony and harmonic overtones and undertones. Figured as poetry it has these too, but it has them as the codes of ideas, as signals of an understanding and communication beyond the range of music, as music is emotionally beyond the range of poetry.

Happily for religion, it has had the capacity—not under inspiration of intellectual statement, for intellect gives light, not fire, but of imagination directed towards living embodiments of reality in the persons of its Founders —of moving individuals to poetry ; and this art of poetry can, if given full opportunity, save religion. The poetry of the Bible is universally recognised. The recognition, however, is not always due to a recognition of its intrinsic

value. Poetry is largely regarded by "practical" individuals as "only poetry," as an irresponsible, demi-official play of imagination or sentiment, intellectually negligible, useful for enjoyment but not for serious consideration, much less for application in the affairs of life. But human life that separates itself from its original poetry, separates itself from a primordial function of the universal life—creative expression—and becomes unpoetical, that is, disorderly, unbeautiful, self-destructive. It is in creative expression that life fulfils itself in the present and transmits itself to the future. The efforts of statesmen to find intellectual formulae on which to pivot national and international action are destined by their own nature to futility. They are blood-kindred to the literalism that, applied by pro-religionists of the dogmatic kind to their beliefs, has imprisoned, starved and depraved their faith, and, applied from outside by unimaginative science or rationalism, has caricatured and outcast religion.

The redemptive hope, whereof the Apostle spake, lies in the emergence of an increasing number of artistically sensitive individuals to whom the poetry of scripture will signal its reality to their own reality, and evoke the creative collaboration that is the essential condition of life. When the scriptures of the world are treated imaginatively, not historically (though their historical content cannot be ignored), interpretatively, not doctrinally (though the mental formulation of reactions to reality cannot be displaced while language persists) ; when they are released from the chains of literalism into the freedom of poetry, the self-impoverishing and mutually destructive separations and

exclusivenesses, which have made religion powerless in the face of world-wide negation of its tenets, will disappear—for imagination and interpretation are, like faith and hope, the two sides of one process ; imagination moving from infinite essentials into finite locations ; interpretation rendering the finite and apparently separate back into its essential and infinite unity.

Yet, if this be a vain hope ; if the separative elements that human limitation has injected into religion are destined to carry on their processes of dry-rot to ultimate disintegration, they to whom poetry has revealed its reality may maintain composure in the assurance that, if all the scriptures of the world were burnt or lost, the essential truths of life, which are the essential truths of religion, could be restored from the vision and utterance of the poets, the great experiencers and expressors. It is not enough to live life : any bivalve or vertebrate can do so. The experience of living, such as the great poets have known it, can only attain the dignity and nobility of real Life when it becomes creatively artistic, deliberately and continually; can only attain the opulence of "life more abundant" on which a real civilisation can be founded, when it becomes the hope-expression of the faith-inspiration.

There is a word of admonition to art itself, if it is not to falsify the faith of the artist. Art, any art, will deny itself the felicity and potency of inspiration so long as it cuts itself off from the ascensive effort of spiritual aspiration, as much of the art of the recent past in the western world has done. And there is a word of great hope for religion —that it has within itself, in the inspiration of its poetry

and ideal personality, the possibility of taking its place as the supreme creative art, and of imposing upon the stuff of life the pattern and beauty and significance of man's most uncompromising dreams and labours towards a perfection whose realisation is the aim of his faith and the inspiration of his hope.

CHAPTER II

# SOME UNRECOGNISED FORCES IN POETICAL CREATION

THE publication in 1932 of the small book entitled "Song and its Fountains" by the Irish poet AE marked an epoch in the literature of personal testimony to experiences in poetical creation different from those usually meant by the term inspiration. Now and again poets had confessed, almost shamefacedly before a sceptical world, of happenings associated with the intense phases of composition that did not arise out of the usual interplay of idea and feeling. But it remained, so far as my reading serves me, for AE to make a detailed exposition of poetry as "oracles from the psyche" based on numerous super-psychological experiences over many years on which he turned the searchlight of a more than ordinarily informed and perspicacious intellect.

During my sixteen years (1897-1913) of frequent contact with AE in the development of the Irish literary and dramatic revival and related nation-building movements, and particularly in his revelations of his inner life to a circle of special friends, I became aware that poetry to him was not a fabrication but a reception. I was not

unprepared for such a discovery, as verses occasionally had come into my mind ready-made during my poetical apprenticeship in Belfast before AE's first book of poems, "Homeward : Songs by the Way," appeared (1894, the same year as my own boyish first book was published), and signalised the arrival of a new poet of a very different order from those who then had the ear of the English-reading public—Kipling, Davidson, Watson, and others.

My contacts with AE were frequent, and spiritually intimate. He taught me mental concentration based on Irish symbology through which something of the secret of my own inner nature was opened to me before I became familiar with Indian thought and disciplines. Yet something in me shrank from the disclosure to him of my developing personal experience of a life beyond my own and its relationship with poetical creation. I was determined not to be intimidated or artificially stimulated even by obvious greatness in another. I was also determined not to allow myself to become an echo and reflection of AE in my art, but to stick to the forms in which I had attained some degree of deftness, with such natural variation as my own capacity might initiate. My poetry might, or might not, be "an ill-favoured thing," but it would be "mine own."

So also, as it happened, would be my drama ; for while AE put on the stage (1902) as one of the pioneering plays of the then renascent drama in Ireland a version of the legendary story of "Deirdre" in language that later would have been called free verse, it fell to me to portray the tragedy of the life of the fisher-folk of Belfast Lough

in plain prose in a little drama, "The Racing Lug," that dropped into my mind out of the receptacle of memory, but completely shaped by an inner creator whose skill in drama was beyond my personal capacity. Shortly afterwards I was asked to make a stage version in blank verse of an Irish legend. During the composition of "The Sleep of the King" the story was transformed somewhere behind my executive imagination into an allegory of the mind being called away by its own inner nature from attachment to external things.

Had I entered into collaboration with AE with no dark line in its spectrum, my experience would certainly have been other than it became ; perhaps more abundant and affluent. But my realisation as time went on that the growing evil in English poetry and the arts in general in the world arose out of ignorance of the reality and spiritual purpose of the impulse to art-creation has brought me to the conviction that variety of independent experience of the influences behind the arts, and declaration of such experience, are essential to the proper placing of the arts among the forces of life. Hence the confession that here follows.

My serious study of the hinterland of art-creation began when my wife and I settled down in 1903 to an inquiry into the realities of life in which her quickly discovered psychic receptiveness and my growing imaginative sensitiveness, and a mutual mental alertness and scrupulous veracity, became the joint vehicle of intimations and experiences so far outside the normal possibilities of our circumstances that we kept them mainly to ourselves.

Psychical automatism was soon superseded by extended sight and hearing, and by a sense at times of both internal and external super-personality. Of the details of such experiences I shall not here speak, as the present narration is concerned with poetical creation.

A preliminary attempt at passive but conscious poetical mediumship had been made when my interest in psychic matters was threatened with supersession by the possibility of my undertaking the composition of an opera-libretto for a rising young musician. Some super-personal power intervened with an effort to dictate the libretto to me through my partner, and thus save my time and energy for other creative work. But the result was so unpoetical that I broke the effort with my contrary will; and the disruption caused a temporary stoppage to both psychical experiences and poetry. Of course the young musician, later world-famous as Sir Hamilton Harty, conductor and composer, knew nothing of these inner matters.

A second effort at writing for music repeated my early experience of ready-made poetry, with its inference of an "inner creator of poetry and myth," as AE puts it in his book. I was asked to write words to an Irish melody by Signor Michele Esposito, then the chief musical influence in Ireland, and my wife's master in her practical work for the degree of Bachelor of Music which she had taken just before our marriage. He had harmonised the melody to suit words already published along with it. But a question of copyright in the poem had arisen, and as the old melody was free from legal restriction, he turned to me as "a rising young poet" to make a new

set of words. The task proved too much for my capacity. It might have been possible to put congruous words to a plain melody ; but the composer's harmonisation of an emotional sequence in three contrasted stanzas necessitated a similar sequence in the words. I could not rise to the complexities of the process, and gave it up. The "inner creator," however, was not to be defeated by my outer incapacity. Some months after I had finally abandoned the attempt, and my imagination had been occupied by other matters, the song appeared in my mind, complete and perfectly congruous to the music, and with a closely knit scheme of consonance and assonance outside my skill but exactly fitting the spirit of the song. The piece, "A Flail-Song," became an acceptable concert item, and is included in the collected edition of my poetry.

My full experience of inner forces in poetical creation began when my partner received super-personal instructions that I was to concentrate on the interpretation of the Irish Mythos in verse. I had begun such a process in "The Sleep of the King." My experience of the inner worlds had put a background of significance to the transactions of the stage of life. My deepening study of *The Secret Doctrine* by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and related books, and the writings of Anna Bonus Kingsford, had given me the equipment of thought and terminology. My poetical technique had been applauded by good critics. My crucial need was discrimination between the Light of lights and the shadows cast by the Light.

My knowledge of the Irish myth-tales was as yet small, and derived from English translations from the

Gaelic. In this respect I was no worse equipped than AE and Yeats; and it is thinkable that liberation from textual and linguistic specialisations left us freer than the archaeologists to feel into the meanings of the stories. My special limitation was a want of imaginative inventiveness. I could work on a theme but could not initiate one. On the other hand my partner could receive in non-cerebral script and by clairaudience, and occasionally by vision, not only dissertations on matters spiritual (which still remain in a lock-box), but symbolical narrations; and this capacity took the place of my lack. Two stories relating to persons in the mythos were dictated to her as material for me to work into poetry. Of the symbolical truth of the stories I had no doubt: they formulated cosmic and psychological truths that aroused my intuition and satisfied my reason. But the sense of artistic rectitude (or was it egotism?) that had held me from full intimacy with AE again asserted itself. Something in me resented my being turned into a poetical catspaw to draw symbolical chestnuts from the embers of destruction. In such a mood, poetry of any kind was impossible. Moreover, I had grave doubts as to my ability to rise to the tremendous matter of the stories. To play the fool in the cause of folly breaks no bones; but to make a fool of oneself in the pursuit of wisdom, while it may be heroic, is certain to be painful. And the income of an office-clerk, and shortly of a junior schoolmaster, did not augur publication even at a time when literary reputations were being made in Ireland on editions of 250 copies, printing paid by the author.

But again the "inner creator" was not idle. There came a day when, apropos of nothing in my outer life, the story of "The Going Forth of Dana" emerged in my imagination with all the glow of self-creation, as if the original transcriber had been the deputy of my deeper consciousness. I do not remember how long it took me to write its 205 lines of blank verse. But I have a very clear memory of the curious double life that I lived while doing so—going through my daily duties, and in the totalling of a column of figures in my business office suddenly finding lines in the back of my head as if they had come through a funnel that opened outwards (perhaps inwards) to some region of light; discussing art or philosophy, woman suffrage or Irish politics with some of the eager young minds that had gathered round us for the study of serious matters, and at the same time being aware that poetical creation was going on behind my executive mind, undirected by me, and that I would have lines to write down afterwards.

One example of such experiences is this. Dana is the mother of the Irish Gods. I imagined her as the soul of the Universe, destined to fall from her co-equality with Dagda, the Lord of Life, and to return to her original state after laborious millennia as the redemptive power in manifestation. She was tempted towards the outer life by one who sowed seeds of flowers in her path. The poem proceeds :

> Straightway sprang to fullest bloom
> Innumerable flowers. About Her feet
> Violet and pansy trembled with delight

At such great life. Across the farther fields
The hyacinth trailed like a faint blue mist ;
While at the foot of heavy-fronded ferns
The cowslip's little rocket skyward shot
And earthward fell in throbbing yellow stars ;
And through the marigold's low-smouldering fire
The crimson tulip flickered like a flame.

My ordinary need for poetical composition has always been solitude, or at least stretches of immunity from challenge to my supersensitive outer mind. The above lines were made by some power behind my mind while the latter was engaged in a discussion with metaphysically-minded friends. This may not appear a matter of much importance or removed from the usual experience of composition in verse. But it will be seen in another light when it is realised, as I only realised some time after the lines came to me, that the succession of the flowers is in the order of the spectrum, an order imposed on the lines without my conscious collaboration.

The other poem was "The Marriage of Lir and Niav," which ran to 483 lines. Lir was, mythologically, the God of the Sea. I saw him as the personification of the positive mental side of the universal Life ; his symbolical gem was the ruby. Niav was the inner aspect of Lir, the Soul of things, "the pearl of great price." Their marriage was the divine transaction of unifying the subjective and objective aspects of consciousness. The theme was nearer than the other to the psychological operations of humanity ; and it was possibly because of this that the supernormal accompaniments of its translation into English poetry were more numerous and definite.

Occasionally, for example, I lost hope of being able to complete the poem ; but I kept the feeling to myself, as I did not want to ruffle the placidity which my wife and I had found necessary for the joint experiments in psychical technique in which we regularly engaged, and in which my own inner moods, provided they remained inner, did not appear to matter, my work being that of helper, observer, recorder, and, in due time, transmitter. On a certain evening, as we sat quietly side by side, I became aware that my partner had become abstracted from external consciousness. On awakening she told me that she had been present at a birthday celebration of a princess, perhaps an Irish Goddess, in a great pillared hall where bards and harpers chanted and played ancient music. She wondered why she had been shown this picture. Then she heard a voice saying that this was to be the next scene of the poem I was writing. She then suspected that I was in difficulty, which I confessed ; and the scene could not have been more suitable if I had entirely imagined it myself. Indeed, the feeling was as if I had done so, but some obstruction in my machinery of reception had necessitated the conveyance of the passage to my executive mind by an alternative route. When the poem was published in the volume " The Quest " in 1906, a London journal pointed out the similarity of the idea of this passage to a passage in a book by Mabel Collins (then unknown to me) and hazarded the idea that plagiarism was not necessarily involved in such parallels, as they might be independent expressions of a common inspiration.

That the feeling of a super-conscious unity was not merely fanciful was shown on another occasion during the writing of the same poem. While my partner was practising what she called "magnetic sleep" in one room of our Dublin home, I, in another, was writing lines that gave me keen pleasure by their unexpected beauty and symbolical truth. Lir was contemplating the spiritual mystery of love which made him simultaneously more and less than his desired bride :

> Oh ! more, far more ;
> For love is might, and of the eternities
> That hinge upon this hour doth make a shell
> To shut thee like a pearl within its heart.
> Less ? Infinitely less ; for all that was,
> Of proud accomplishment or chanted fame,
> Or jewelled tribute from my utmost isles,
> Has through this flame of love passed into dust
> To make but one poor ruby for thy brow.

I knew that the pearl was the Soul, and the ruby the active Mind, and that the ultimate achievement of the Mind was the transformation of its conquests into an ornament fit for the Soul to wear—a truth whose practical application would have solved the problems of the time, as it would those of today ; and the realisation of this was my unuttered reply to criticism of wasting time on ancient "unpractical" themes. I had completed the above passage when I was called to the other room to record as usual in shorthand what my partner had experienced while out of the body. She was in a specially happy mood, as she had something very special to tell me. She had been admitted to what she had come to regard as the place of

the Irish Divinities. A Goddess (of whom she gave a description agreeing with a description which I thought I had imagined, and of which I had not told her) had approached her as she knelt in salutation, and told her to rise and look into a casket which the Goddess carried in her hands. The casket contained a *pearl* and a *ruby*. The Goddess conveyed to the mind of the terrestrial visitor that the pearl was herself, Niav, and the ruby her consort, Lir ; and told her to tell this, on her return to earth, to me, and that I would understand. When I read her my lines afterwards, she knew why I understood. The experience enlarged to us the possibility of double, perhaps multiple, reception from a common centre of creation outside the normal field of consciousness ; it also had bearings on simultaneous discovery, like that of Darwin and Wallace on the laws of evolution, and on the recurrent phenomenon of ideas or emotions " in the air." Thirty and more years later I put the incident into the poem " The Oracle " which became the title-piece of my volume published in 1938.

It is natural to desire for such experiences some kind of completely objective reinforcement. To ourselves they were, so to speak, subjectively objective in that they were beyond our initiative and control, and sometimes contradicted and corrected our personal knowledge and ideas, but operated within our own subjective area, and, though convincing to ourselves through accumulated experience and inference, were incapable of communication, much less demonstration, to others. Even when we had an occasional phenomenon, such as psychic

instruction as to where to find a material object whose existence was unknown to us, but which we actually found, we could only rely on mental balance in going through the experience, and veracity in recording and occasionally telling it.

A professor of Psychology (this was thirty years ago) explained the foregoing incident as "mind shadows." A Professor of Education regarded alleged telepathy as the result of a "nasal whisper." Still, we were not deterred ; and the accumulation of records of *apports* in the years between then and now will make the following unexpected objective experience, with its bearing on the topic of this chapter, less fantastical than it would have been accounted when it happened.

I had reached a point almost of desperation over the apparent impossibility of ever finishing "Lir and Niav." No concentration or relaxation would make it move. For mental relief I went out to the wall of Dublin Bay round the corner from our home, leaned my arms on the parapet, and looked vaguely out over the water, then at full tide, without a ripple, "too full for sound and foam," but clearly seen in the diffused light of a cloud-hidden moon. An argument began in my head, perhaps a dramatisation of (or by) my consciousness, yet with my executive consciousness listening to it with the separate interest experienced in dream. Something argued the stupidity of my wasting time and mental energy in trying to write a poem that I would never finish ; that, if finished, would never be published ; that, if published, would not be read, and, if read, would not be understood.

Something rejoined that to bring spiritual vision into poetry through an Irish myth was a work worth all sacrifice and trouble. Then I asked, Where did I come in, with mental agony, and time passing that might go to work for improving my position in life ? I was willing to go on with the poem, but felt that I should be given some encouragement and ratification more concrete than the subjective signs that, however convincing at the time, were likely to blur and fade.

Then I boldly addressed the Spirit of the Sea to the effect that I believed that the world of waters was not merely a matter of chemistry ; that it was created and controlled not only by impersonal laws but by some kind of personal Life ; and that, since I was trying to express its inner meaning in poetry, I should be given some sign. Instantly I was splashed with water that tasted salt on my lips. I looked for some explanatory movement in the water, but there was none. There was nobody but myself anywhere visible. There was no tangible agency to be seen that could exert the energy necessary to lift a quantity of water from the sea some eight feet below me and sprinkle it over me in large drops. I went back to my home pondering, and let myself quietly in with my latch-key. My wife heard me and came to the hall-door, expressing surprise at my having gone out at an unusual time, and at its having been raining as she judged by the drops on my hat and elsewhere. She made to remove the drops, but I told her they were not raindrops, and must not be removed, and that I would explain them later. I went

to my quiet corner and wrote a series of the best lines in the poem.

My experiences of a super-conscious creative centre paralleled those of AE. With these there were, as I have indicated, sources of inspiration and illumination objective to our own areas of consciousness, though not in any way tangible to others. As an artist in poetry I maintained my own imaginative integrity, keeping the subject-matter of the poetry which I was creating away from its alleged super-personal origin. Any self-consciousness in this respect during the process of composition would have destroyed artistic sincerity and true receptivity. A claim, also, to super-personal collaboration in my poetry, when published, would have added to it an ulterior, and to me uncongenial, element which might conceivably have increased its circulation either by ignorant condemnation or irrelevant appreciation.

At the same time, as a beginner in the study of occult principles and practice, I kept watch on another side of my mind (a process not difficult to Gemini rising and a birthday gift of a double crown) for corrections or corroborations concerning our invisible mentors. Of these, the chief was an entity who claimed to be the leader of a band of beings outside incarnation whose work was to keep alive, by suggestion to sensitives, the inner meanings of universal life and their expression in myths and imaginative poetry. Their influence, we were told, would be found symbolised at critical points in human history, where the lost past was restored by some individual, such as Tuan MacCairill in the Irish myths. We found

Hesiod in Grecian literature doing the same. Later, when our happy destiny brought us to India, we added Veda Vyasa to the list of restorers of human memory. We remembered Plato's saying that education was a restoration of memory. My work was also a reminder of forgotten meanings, consciously esoteric, and subject to modern psychological conditions and my own capacity and quality as a poet. The two myth-poems of definitely superpersonal origin were not remarkable in length (688 lines) ; yet, reading them now, over thirty years after their publication, I can catch the flicker and gleam from heights of spiritual illumination whose elucidation in prose would need a large volume.

Two incidents occurred bearing retrospectively on the objectivity of our chief mentor to whom I shall refer as S. . . .

Looking over a bookseller's shelves in Dublin one day long after the myth-poems had been published, I saw a new edition of the " Apocrypha of the Old Testament." As I had conceived a desire to study these, having a private suspicion that their rejection from the canon of Holy Scripture by orthodoxy inferred matter of special interest to the heterodox, into which category both my Catholic and Protestant friends had put me on account of my peculiar interests, I bought a copy. My study was concerned with comparative religion. No thought of superpersonally suggested myth-poetry was in my mind. That phase of my creative life had passed—to return thirty years later, as I shall indicate hereafter. When I reached a certain verse in a chapter of one of the books

of Esdras, I got something to think about rather than comparative religion in coming across the exact name of S . . . and observing that the work of Esdras in the history of Israel corresponded in some measure to what I had done in esoteric myth-making.

The other incident occurred during a visit of Alfred Vout Peters to Dublin. Mr. Peters was not only a clairvoyant and clairaudient but a psychometrist. In my study of occultism I had developed a desire to have one form of psychical reception tested by another. I had watched a lady in one corner of a large room automatically make a symbolical design, while another lady, in another corner and completely separated from the first, received a non-cerebral script giving the meaning of the symbol. I had asked Ronald Brailey, when on a visit to Ireland, to see what he could get clairvoyantly while my partner received writing from a source unknown to him or me. He got nothing concerning the script. His attention had been attracted by some old-world ceremonial on the Hill of Howth, a promontory seen from our drawing-room window—a procession in antique paraphernalia and moving with marked solemnity, not on the ground but in the air above the headland. We dismissed the experiment as a failure, and the clairvoyance as of some matter outside our ken. Next morning we read in the paper that the Earl of Howth had died the previous day. The house of Howth was of the ancient nobility of Ireland. The Earl was, if I remember correctly, eighty, and had no direct heirs. His long line had come to an end—a fitting occasion for an astral or akashic

demonstration, and an evidence of the objectivity of the clairvoyance, though our personal desire had not been fulfilled.

The experiment with Mr. Peters was different. I gave him some non-cerebral manuscripts with the intention of testing whether he psychometrically could pass the personality of the recipient and contact the presumed superpersonal communicator. By a series of pictures thrown into his mind he conveyed to us the special mission of one of our communicators, a script purporting to come from whom had been, as we found, chosen by Mr. Peters unknown to us. Another script he found to be very unusual ; not from anyone who had ever been in incarnation ; some high Being whose work was to awaken racial memory ; something related with the soil under his feet ; that made him want to sing. The script was found to be one from S . . . dealing with the myth-poems.

I have told above of the varied experiences connected with the composition of two Celtic myth-poems, "The Going forth of Dana," and "The Marriage of Lir and Niav." Certain of those experiences, while supernormal in the ordinary sense, were still within the range of possibly more extended psychological power than normally is exercised. But there were circumstances connected with the composition of the poems of so objective a nature as to place them beyond the psychological explanation of "wish-fulfilment." I shall now relate some experiences connected with certain of my lyrical poems, experiences to which the general term "occult" may be legitimately applied in the sense of

extra-normal, and which may be divided into visual and verbal reception, that is, both revelations and "oracles from the Psyche" and from beyond but through the Psyche.

In my school-mastering days in Dublin during my thirties, 1905 to 1913, I became a pioneer of physical geography in High Schools, and wrote the first Irish-published text-book on the subject. While working up the book, I spent some time each afternoon in the National Library summarising authorities. One afternoon, while studying the latest scientific ideas on the formation of hills and valleys for a geological chapter, I, being fatigued after a specially exacting day at school, fell into a drowsy state, and in this state wrote in shorthand, with no collaboration of ordinary consciousness, and without corrections, fifty lines telling "How the Mountains came to be"—an essay in spiritual geography to the effect that by aspiration one may both raise his own share of earth and exert an upward pull on others, thus creating not only an individual peak but ranges of achievement. This thesis was expressed in a myth of an angel who found himself on the earth when it was flat. He tried to get away from it, but was held by the clay under his feet. A voice told him that the only way of escape was through prayer. He prayed, and arose, and drew the earth up after him. The poem put into lyrical expression a picture that had spontaneously crossed my vision, apropos of nothing in particular, some years previously, but I had forgotten, in the ordinary sense of the term. Some years later than the reception of the poem I came across a legendary incident in the life of Saint Mungo to

the effect that when, on his tours in remote districts of Scotland, he could not find a ready eminence from which to preach, he selected a suitable spot, uttered a prayer, and the earth rose the required height under his feet.

During my year in Japan (1919-1920) as special Professor of Modern English Poetry in the Keiogijuku University, Tokyo, I spent part of the summer vacation of 1919 in the hospitable and artistic home of Professor E. E. Speight at Nikko, not far from the Summer Palace of the late Emperor. With fine literary considerateness my host had put an outfit of pencils and paper on a table at the head of my bed in case an idea might come to me, as frequently happened to himself. I had never written under such conditions in either verse or prose. But I was interested, and had an impulse to show my appreciation in at least a quatrain. I had become acquainted with the Japanese short poem with its simple expression of a single visual object. My memory presented me with the splendid conjunction of Jupiter and Venus that I had seen over a smooth sea on my way from India. I put the phenomenon into four plain descriptive lines, leaving emotion to the capacity of whoever read the lines to thrill to the lovely sight and its implications.

> Venus and Jupiter sat side by side
> On a cloud-bank above the buried sun ;
> But in the silver mirror of the tide
> Their sea-washed limbs were mingled into one.

Satisfied that I had done a complete thing I fell asleep. When I awoke after a dreamless night I was surprised,

and much pleased, to find that something deeper than either dreaming or waking consciousness had taken the four lines as the theme of what I saw was a well-constructed and deftly worded development in two intellectually complementary directions, one from above downwards, as of higher Beings descending into the waters of our life, the other from below upwards, as of the aspiring spirit of humanity. All I had to do was to transcribe an already composed poem. I had always fought shy of any specific expression in my poetry of the knowledge that had come to me of the intermingling in our world of entities called Rishis, Adepts or Masters. I knew something of the way in which one's own consciousness and theirs can be brought into communion, but had never found the audacity or the way of giving my knowledge poetical expression. I was therefore much impressed with the fact that the inner creator had set aside my reticence as regards superpersonal Personality and the mental and physical disciplines by means of which, in the long experience of India, they could be approached, and had shown how such things could be given a more direct expression in verse than in the mythical and imaginative manner in which I had hitherto dealt with them. "A Planetary Conjunction" has its place in my *Collected Poems*, but I shall transcribe here the lines referred to.

But this I know,
That Godlike ones have bathed their shining limbs
In the thick turgid sea
Of our mortality,
Not only in divine theophany,
But verily themselves, yea verily!

For in the hour when the brain's fen-fire dims,
And the blood's flickering whims
Make of themselves a white
And steady light,
Then have they crossed my sight,
Even as seer and prophet saith.
That this is so
My lifted hand here witnesseth . . .

My Japanese year provided me with another superconscious experience in poetical creation, with a touch of extraneousness that demonstrated not only the operation of the inner creator, but indicated the possibility of collaboration from regions and centres of consciousness beyond individual demarcation, and gave me a measure of understanding of "inspiration" and the experience that in ancient Hebraic times prompted the announcement, "Thus saith the Lord." During my residence in Tokyo I spent a number of week-ends at the delightful home of the poet-professor, Yone Noguchi, in the suburb of Nakano. In the afternoon I rested on a couch in his studio. On the wall at the foot of the couch hung a Noh-drama mask that irritated me, as I had not attained the Japanese paradox of seeing beauty in ugliness. I suggested its exchange with another mask in the entrance-hall that in the dimness after the light of day looked like Shakespeare. It was not Shakespeare, however, but a life-mask of Francis Thompson that had been given to Noguchi by the Meynells when he was in London. The exchange was agreed to. I felt that the occasion called for ceremonial. We formed a procession, Noguchi leading with the mask in his hands, followed by Mrs. Noguchi, two

little daughters, a servant-maid, and myself, each carrying a burning " jostick " in the right hand. We moved slowly and silently from the hall, by the veranda opening on to a typical Japanese garden, to the studio. Before I left Japan and Noguchi's couch I had Francis Thompson's face off by heart. A year after my return to India I was a resident, for the second time, in beautiful Adyar, on the beach of the Bay of Bengal a little south of Madras, teaching English literature to students at the new National University founded by Dr. Annie Besant as a demonstration of education for Indians in India. The congeniality of my environment, and the literary interest and speculation in my students, stimulated my own creative faculty, and I began the fulfilment of an impulse that had occasionally come to me of celebrating in poetry the procession of the mask in Japan. At one of the English classes a student asked me if I did not think that dead poets were still interested in the poetry that they had made while alive. I felt sure, I said, that those to whom their poetry was the essential expression of their inner nature and spiritual vision, must watch over it and its mission. I had the subtler, but private, conviction that their contact with their poetry was maintained through the minds of the readers of poetry—a matter which placed a solemn responsibility on such readers, and made criticism an exposition not only outwards towards students of poetry, but inwards towards its creators. While walking back that forenoon from the College to my rooms through a casuarina plantation, I became filled with an urgent desire to have a demonstration of the continued connection of

poets with their poetry. I formulated a strong request that a figure of speech, typically Thompsonian but not used by Francis Thompson, should as a sign be thrown into my mind for use in the mask-poem which I was then writing. The request was no sooner formulated than forgotten, for my eyes (and they must have been deeper eyes than those that guided my feet automatically towards "Chambers"[1]) were fascinated by the sight (if it was sight) of a figure such as an early-Christian painter might have painted if he had been also a Hindu painter. But it was not a picture that I saw : it was a vast Being, who played some kind of tremendous music on an instrument like a colossal violin. And as He played, I observed a curious commotion taking place on myriads of horizontal discs spread out as far as the eye could see on all sides. All the discs bore the same design until the Player changed His tonality, when instantaneously they all bore another, but the same, design, and so on through a series. I understood that I might, if my eyes were keen enough, see minute differences in the designs due to differences in the powdery material of which the designs were composed and in the responsive capacity of the discs. The "vision" disappeared, but emerged in my imagination as a figurative expression of the law that true poetry is a response of individual genius to the poetry of the Universe, the discs symbolising the verbal and mental-emotional contents of the poet's consciousness. I put the idea into six lines (quoted below), and something within me, or

[1] Leadbeater Chambers, the European residential quarters in The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras.

perhaps it was without, smiled and said : " Is not that the answer to your request ? " The idea was certainly in the Thompsonian manner. A re-reading of his poetry did not find a similar image ; but a vague suggestion of it turned up later in a reading of his prose. The lines fell into their place in " Processional Ode."

> Now we, to the sound of the heart's fire and drum,
> Though secretly our eyes be sweetly wet,
> Here in the front of his closed house of life
> His hatchment proudly set ;
> Proudly, yet not in vainly swelling pride,
> But in deep humbleness, as his, clear-eyed,
> That held his music but an answering strain
> When the Celestial Fiddler drew His bow
> In ear-shot of the soul's taut tympanum,
> And sands of speech, dead-scattered else and dumb,
> Sprang to the pattern-dance of hidden strings
> With stars and leaves and waves and wings.

It was then my practice to send a copy of my new poems to an Indian friend of taste and scholarship who took a special interest in my work. I did so in this case also, but made no reference to the passage referred to. He wrote me a long critique of the Ode in which he became enthusiastic over the passage. He regarded it as expressing the true law of poetical creation, and said he felt, when reading the last six lines of the section quoted above, as if the spirit of Francis Thompson hovered over me. I retain the feeling that the incident was extraneous to my individual consciousness, with all due recognition of the psychological possibilities that may be invoked in explanation ; and in recording it eighteen years after the event, it appears to me to be an example of extra-personal

intervention that may be a more frequent experience of aspiring poets than is generally recognised.

Whatever element of wish-fulfilment may have evoked the foregoing incident, there was nothing of the kind, rather the reverse, in the unexpected fragmentary intrusions (from what part of the vast hinterland of ordinary consciousness who shall say ?) that ultimately caused the creation of the long poem called "The Troth." In the summer of 1930, when I was in Geneva on a second lecture-tour of Europe and America, a number of lines fell into my mind at irregular intervals, apropos of nothing in which I was interested, in entirely incongruous circumstances such as when stepping on to the foot-board of a tram-car. I noted the lines on a loose piece of paper which I carried in my pocket. They had no obvious connection, but resembled one another in metre and suggestions of a stanza-form as in the group :

. . . . . . . .

But neither time nor space can mar
A tryst that antedates the sun,
A bond sealed on a vanished star,

lines that might mean a lot or nothing. Some time afterwards I went to Capri Island for a month as the guest of an artist-friend in an exquisite home on a hillside overlooking vineyards and olive gardens and the Mediterranean Sea. I enjoyed nature, congenial friendships, and delightful objects of art ancient and modern. One day my poetical conscience smote me with a reminder of past desires for congenial surroundings in which to be nothing but a poet.

To the inner question, What's the matter with this? I could only answer that *I* was the matter: I had no impulse or idea. I was then reminded of the lines that had been thrown into my mind in Geneva, with a suggestion that they might be peaks above the sea indicating a hidden continent. I searched for the paper with the noted lines, but had to give it up as lost. It occurred to me that, since the lines, whatever their source, had passed through my mind, they must have left a memory-trace. I set myself the task of recovering the lines, or, rather, of letting them uncover themselves to me by a process of clearing my outer mind of its surface contents, and allowing my inner consciousness to send to the surface the required matter. Not only did I recover the lines, but the process set the machinery of poetical creation to work, and I finished the 228 lines of "The Troth" in the half of the moon. Later, turning over a file of papers through which I had searched in vain for the noted lines, I came on a blank piece of paper, and on reversing it found that it was the lost record. Had I found it at first, some other poem, or none, would have been the result; and my imagination would have had otherwise to come upon the stupendous conception of the return of life from incalculable multiplicity to simple unity.

Two years later I was on Capri again, with time and inducement to poetry. I had begun the fulfilment of a desire of forty years previously to versify a Celtic myth. I had first wished to make a drama of it at the time when plays were necessary for the growing revival of drama in Ireland. Later I left drama to others who seemed better

fitted than I was to raise a national theatre on the life of a predominantly Catholic and agricultural people, I having been Protestant born and city reared. After some experience as an actor in small parts and the pleasure of bowing occasionally to first-night calls of "Author, author!" I returned to lyrical poetry, and left drama, as I thought, to wait for its place in the early chapter of my reminiscences. But in India, a dozen years afterwards, an attack of dramatic lonesomeness coincided with my finding of a ragged book containing the life of the Rani Mirabai of Mewar; and a three-act play in blank verse, "The King's Wife," came out of spare and sometimes pilfered hours in the life of the Principal of an up-country College for Indian boys. This I took to be my "positively last appearance" as a dramatist. I found myself not only unwilling but incapable of writing another Indian drama for a company that was anxious to spread my work. My creative mind, at a later time when the rest of my mind and its emotional and physical appurtenances were being increasingly engaged in activity on behalf of the indigenous cultures of India, became more and more Irish. I turned to battered but treasured books that had been the scriptures of my young manhood, re-read the bardic tale of the Feast of Bricriu-bitter-tongue and the connected tale of the Three Sons of Doel Dermait, which had stirred my young imagination, and began what promised to be a long poem full of high significances and beauty. I hoped to advance the poem on Capri. Two lines sailed into my head on a walk under the walls of San Michele with Vesuvio indicating in smoke what it could do if it

only would. I got no further with the myth-poem. The inner creator had other plans. One morning, while seated after sunrise on a bench in a secluded part of the garden, a drama began to enact itself before my inner eyes, as if in a dream though I was awake. I heard no words ; action was sketchy ; but I knew what was taking place, though I had no part in its initiation. I saw the cell of the Three Sons of Doel Dermait (a mythical king) in their prison on a legendary island. I saw that when they retired at night, three down-and-outs awoke in a lodging-house in Dublin to a day of search for employment, and I knew that they were reflections in common life of the three Heroes, Cuchulain, Laeg and Lugaidh, embodiments of will, intuition, and intellect, who were to release the Three Sons. The dream-play was broken by a call to breakfast, and I thought I would not be able to recover it. But on my return to the seat it resumed its movement to the end, and I made a note of it for future possibilities. Other interests occupied my mind for some time, and the myth receded. But while summering at Kalimpong in front of Kinchinjunga under a great jacaranda tree, the first scene on the prisoners' island flung itself into prose drama which I turned into verse in order to keep the scene in the poetical mood of the already written parts. Later I took up residence in work for the arts in Trivandrum, the capital of the most tropical State in India. Climate frequently made sleep impossible, and was assisted by extravagant and unnecessary hooting of motors in a side road under my windows especially in the small hours of the morning with " not a mouse stirring " ;

assisted also by the howling and barking of a dog that was old enough to have more sense and considerateness, and for whom I kept handy an empty asparagus tin that I threw at him and in dressing-gown and sandals retrieved for further use. On such occasions, when I should have been blind and brainless with insomnia, I found myself all alive, and recording in blank verse the three scenes of the Dublin episode in the myth-poem-drama. I tittered at the spontaneous unfoldment of the plot with its queer mixture of humorous realism (an ingredient that had only once before shown itself in a comedy that was taken to America and lost) and an Irishness of expression that I had never before attempted, indeed considered myself quite incapable of ; and I got thrills and shivers at times as I realised the subtle way in which a farce became infused with spiritual import under laughter, and expressed as by a parable some of the profoundest realities of the universe and the soul of humanity. A second scene on the prison-island had to be done, for when the three rapscallions of Dublin were taken to the lock-up to be tried next morning on a preposterous but quite congruous charge, the Three Sons awoke in their cell to a day of liberation by the Celtic saviour-hero, Cuchulain. Many activities intervened to delay the composing of the scene. On a train journey from Hyderabad to Madras part of it came without a warning. Another part came under the deodars of Urusvati up the side of the Kulu Valley at the home of the artist-seer, Nicholas Roerich. The finishing of the mythological story-drama in verse is now my main desire. In a life always more than ordinarily busy with

many affairs in education and art, I have never been busier than now at sixty-eight. Yet the inner creator seems to find the outer instrument as amenable as ever, perhaps more so, to super-personal influence in poetical creation, as I have frequent experiences of spontaneous incursions not only of ideas but of lines having all the finality of close composition.

I leave the possible recounting of these to the future. The foregoing will suffice as a confession of knowledge of matters which, whatever their explanation as to origin, suggest a more frequent collaboration of inner powers with outer capacities than is ordinarily realised by spectators or admitted by creators. This knowledge has naturally gone to the making of my own faith as to the nature of art and artists ; and when extended and ratified by a growing number of artist-sensitives in the future, will raise the whole conception and exercise of humanity's central endowment and responsibility as participants in the creative activity of the universe, an activity in which sense will be subservient to spirit.

CHAPTER III

# EXALTATION AND PURIFICATION IN ART

IF it be deemed necessary to present an authoritative preliminary justification for spending even a short time thinking about so apparently insignificant a thing as art in war-time, we may confidently tack the following on the lintel of the doorway to our disquisition.

> *Ideas of beauty are amongst the noblest which can be presented to the human mind, invariably exalting and purifying it, according to their degree.*

This doctrine was enunciated by John Ruskin, who wrote foolishly about Indian Art in his "Two Paths", and atoned by writing and speaking wisely about art in general. It covers two necessities of the mind at all times, but especially in war-time, the necessity of *exaltation* and the necessity of *purification*. Both terms need clarification :

For if exaltation by contemplation of ideas of beauty meant only the development of the up-tilted chin of superiority, it would be futile, also dangerous :

And if purification meant only physical continence and cleanliness, it would be inadequate.

When Rabindranath Tagore prayed, " Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles," he did not desire to be relieved of the responsibilities of life. Any weakling can ignore things. But beneficently to manipulate details, whether trifling or important, from above, which is the only effective direction for so doing, requires the elevation of disinterestedness, and the cutting of the threads of sea-level attachments or tyrannies ; and this needs the ascensive strength for which the poet prayed. There never has been, there never will be, any harmonisation of discordant details or groupings of details from within themselves. To " get *down* to reality " is to get down to illusion, separation, disintegration. He spoke one of the cardinal truths of the technique of real life who said, " And I, if I be *lifted up*, will draw all men unto me." But for nearly two thousand years most of his followers have let Him down, down from the exaltation of sacrifice to the ground-level of partisanship ; and men, instead of being drawn to Him by intuitive exposition and living demonstration of the universal truth that the imagination of a few illuminated ones attributed to Him, have been driven away from Him by the zeolatry that darkens and debases the heart and mind when the reality of the spiritual imagination is reduced to the limitations of personality and place and time.

Purification, in Ruskin's use of the word, is not confined to the restricted meaning given to its current synonym, morality. Morality and ethics are complementary emotional and mental means of adjustment of the individual to the group. As expedients they have their

use in emergency. But because human life is in a state of perpetual emergency, with warfare as a periodical large-scale demonstration of maladjustment which is only disguised in peace-time, morality and ethics have been promoted from the category of temporary expedients to that of settled habits. In this they have become subtle dangers to real progress, inasmuch as the application of moral and ethical checks to human turpitude has diverted attention and energy away from the real matter of extirpating the conditions that cause the evil. Moreover, moral and ethical expedients are external impositions on forces generated within human nature, and, being as incongruous as amputation of a foot for the cure of stupidity, are condemned to perpetual futility. The purification that can result from Ruskin's contemplation of ideas of beauty is not a reaction statutorily or socially produced by pressure from outside or below. Pressure from outside intensifies that which it would obviate : pressure from below debases that towards which it would raise itself. Purification must itself be exalted if it is to attain purity, as exaltation must be pure if it is to reach its perfect height. Ruskin saw that purification and exaltation were two aspects of one attainment, and he prescribed one method for that attainment—the contemplation of ideas of beauty.

The contemplation of ideas of beauty may be directed towards the beauty of nature, wherein we come into relationship with the operations of a creative power *outside* ourselves, fabricating objects that rouse the experience of beauty ; objects on which we can exercise a certain amount of modification, such as the diverting of a

stream or the hybridising of plants, but over which we can exercise no radical and final control, since we can only deal with a stream as running water, not as standing stone, and with plants as growing organisms, not as molten metal. Such contemplation may also be directed towards the beauty expressed in art, wherein we realise intimately the operations of a creative power *within* ourselves, whose primal intention and laws we cannot alter, but whose overt manifestation in our individual selves we can facilitate or frustrate by the fitness or unfitness of the triple instrument of expression, brain and heart and body.

Both approaches to the contemplation of ideas of beauty (and such contemplation implies a capacity to recognise beauty attained through many and varied experiences of it), both approaches, the natural and the artistic, are necessary for a full exercise of such contemplation. We must take the artistic eye and an ear to nature if we are to enter into her lovely secrets of design and form, colour and texture and sound. On the other hand, if we are to preserve our own artistic expression from being but a caricature of the intention of the inner creator, we must have constant recourse to the expressions of nature, not, however, as copies, but as paradigms and inspirations.

Both approaches are, as I have said, necessary. But the artistic approach is the more necessary, because, while nature is always with us, it is always without us ; whereas art, while its demonstrations and communications are apparently without us, in our statues and paintings, our poetry

and our music, has its origins, its laws and its fulfilments within us. No object of art is ever regarded, even by the most realistically minded observer, as object only. The nearest nominal approach to doing so is in regarding it as objectively as possible, that is, in contemplating those elements that are characteristic of its material nature, without reference to the feeling that animates it or the idea that it embodies. But there is no point in spending precious time contemplating a statue as a piece of stone ; and the instant we contemplate the stone as a statue, and relate it to the technique of art, to the manner in which the craftsman has manipulated the material according to its nature, we have moved away from objectivity into the world of the mind.

The Kingdom of art, like the Kingdom of Heaven, is within us. That is to say (translating a figure of speech into another figure of speech), the habitat of art is in a region of our nature above the paraphernalia of its expressions in form. But within that region there are levels of ascent or descent from the lowest feelings and thoughts to the highest inspirations and illuminations. According to the height from which our inspiration and illumination fall will be the power and lustre of our artistic expression. Conversely, the nearer such expression is to the nature of its inner source, the more fully will it absorb and transmit the special qualities that we identify as beauty ; and the contemplation of these qualities, and the ideas associated with them, will lead us back to the hill-tops on which they take their rise. Art *in excelsis* (and it is only the high types of art that are here thought of) is an expression of

exalted consciousness, and tends to exalt that with which it comes in contact. It is also an expression of purity—not the artificial purity of moral codes which, through their exaggerations and their inabilities to respond to the curves and rhythms of life, have caused a true proverb to be perverted into the half truth that "to the pure all things are impure." Art purifies by its search for and exhibition of essentials, and essentials are never impure. Sex, for example, is essential, and pure ; sexuality in thought and feeling is non-essential, and impure. Where non-essentials are, Art is not. This is not to say that that which may be non-essential in a work of art may not be essential in some other activity. The service of art is not the creation of an orthodoxy of essentialism ; it is the cultivation of an intuition of essentiality which will serve the purposes not of art only but of all life, by inducing a capacity of selection and organisation among the details of life that mentally will be seen as truth, and emotionally will be felt as beauty. And when truth and beauty meet in the thoroughfares of life, their classical comrade, goodness, does not need an invitation to join them, for goodness, which is essential action, is not only guided by truth and warmed by beauty, but is their inevitable fulfilment.

The view of art which I have here enunciated may be entitled pragmatical ; that is, it asks a work of art not only to *be* something, but to *do* something. It asks of art a service to life beyond that of pleasure, even of cultured pleasure as distinct from the vulgar pleasures derived from spurious or half arts. It asks of art the elevation and purification of thought, feeling and action. Such a view

of art is probably the only one that would justify to the practical-minded a consideration of art in war-time. Indeed, art thus viewed, and applied the world over in education, would tend to annul warfare by opposing creation to destruction. Such a view of art, a higher practical view, liberates art from the intellectual bonds of abstract aesthetics. It is also, as it happens, the classical Indian view, the view of art as a means of attaining the highest quality in personal character and citizenship.

When I say that the pragmatical view of art is also the classical Indian view, I do not mean that it is the only view, and expressed alike by all the philosophers in all the Indian systems. Indian philosophy deals with all life, horizontally, vertically and obliquely. But underneath the varieties of intellectual formulation there are certain interpretations of life which are of demonstrable universal validity ; and in certain of the scriptures that deal with art (*silpa-sastras*), there are principles applicable to art everywhere at all times.

Touching, for instance, the matter of exaltation in art, the *Sahitya Darpana* (as translated by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami in his treasure of aesthetical knowledge and wisdom, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*) declares that " all expressions, human or revealed, are directed to an end beyond themselves, or if not so determined, are thereby comparable only to the utterances of a madman." Here we have an ancient anticipation of the findings of modern psychological science in its indication of mental derangement (whose simplest symptoms are disconnection of ideas and interest through loss of a centralised

control) as a parallel to what takes place in expression, in art and in everything else, if such expression is not directed towards an intention superior to and in control of the details of its expression.

Expression thus regarded is obviously not for its own ends, but for the fulfilment of an exalted purpose. "Art for Art's sake," in the sense usually extracted from that phrase, is meaningless from the pragmatical point of view. A Upanishad analyses the interests of life, and teaches that they are not to be valued for their service to themselves, but for their service of the Self; that is, of a centralised control, above the details of its terrain, personal, local, cultural, national, mundane or super-mundane, utilitarian or aesthetical; a Self whose relationship with its sub-selves is that of intense interest and supreme disinterestedness. This is another way of saying the "end beyond themselves" which ensures sanity in "all expressions." It is also another way of pointing to the unity in variety which is a fundamental necessity in a work of art, and one of its most valuable pragmatical inculcations.

On the matter of *purification* through art, we have an admirable suggestion of its pragmatical basis in the doctrine of the *Alamkara* that "art subserves the four purposes of life: (1) *dharma* (action), (2) *artha* (wealth), (3) *kama* (pleasure), (4) *moksha* (freedom). Looked at with the modern psychological mind, these "four purposes" are seen, not as four separate intentions of life, but as two pairs of interacting necessities inherent in the nature of things. We have, on one side, the substances of life (*artha*) and the sane regulation of our actions towards

them (*dharma*). On the other side we have the pleasure-impulse (*kama*) which attracts us to the substances of life, and the necessity of maintaining freedom (*moksha*) from the tendency of substance-pleasure to utilise us for satisfactions inherent in its own nature. And as *moksha* frees us from the enslavements of *kama*, so does *dharma* free us from the tyrannies of *artha*. We may, moreover, for the further satisfaction of the mind, put the "four purposes of Life" in an ascending column—(1) The substances of life (*artha*); (2) the pleasure of life (*kama*) arising out of the association of the human sensorium with *artha*; (3) the discipline (*dharma*) that enables the human unit to maintain its personal identity against the natural forces which, yielded to beyond a certain point, would reduce personal identity to impersonal non-entity; (4) the state of poise, between apparently opposed demands, in which the real individual attains freedom (*moksha*) to utilise the laws and substances of life for its own exalted and purified purposes—not in a state of conflict which only intensifies opposites, but by understanding the nature of such laws and purposes, and adapting action accordingly.

The pragmatical view of art, the expectation from art-activity and art-objects of influences towards exaltation and purification, is not limited to the deliberate portrayal or expression of emotions and themes calculated to uplift and purify artist and audience. There is no relationship between art-pragmatism and emotional zealotry or mental pedantry. These latter are slaves of outer expression, of institutionalised feelings and ideas that multiply and magnify the individual and social dangers inherent in any

kind of "fixation." But art which responds freely to pragmatical requirements fulfils the deepest laws of its own being, and, in doing so, finds liberation; not liberation as an end, which would mean stagnation, but liberation as a perpetual process moving naturally towards exaltation and purification and their accompanying peace and joy.

CHAPTER IV

# THE NEED OF A SPIRITUAL RESTORATION OF ART

LIFE is a perpetual re-creation, moving by power, through law, to knowledge; moving also by the development of finer powers to the realisation of higher law and the attainment of fuller knowledge. But life is neither fulfilled nor circumscribed nor superseded by power or law or knowledge: to these it is original; they to it are derivative.

Seen thus, human life can make only partial, hence misleading, contacts with "the total push and pull of the universe" (as William James phrased it) through thought alone, or feeling alone, or action alone. Its fullest contact can only be made by action which, like the life of the universe, so far as we can realise it, is creative; that is, action which unfolds inherent characteristics, and does so within a pattern identified by the mind, and in a rhythmical order that arises from and invokes feeling.

With these conditions of life in mind, we can, I think, find a clue to the failure of religion, philosophy, or science to solve the problems of life, and find also a justification for seeking a more effective means of coordinating individual and group life with the life of

humanity as a whole and of humanity's natural and cosmical environment.

Religious emotion may, through the power of invocation, catch hints from the heart of things. But the tendency of the religious impulse to fall into doctrinal and liturgical rigidities has lowered the vitality of religion by turning originally creative thought into sterile dogma, and creative feeling into destructive bigotry.

Philosophy has sought to penetrate to the secret of the cosmic life by mental concentration. But, because of the separation which it has set up between the human mind and the supposed remote object of its contemplation, it has failed to establish a complete intellectual intimacy between man and the universe. It has failed also to build its most assured principles into the structure of human life and organisation, by following the inadequate "light of the reason" and by failing to grasp the full significance of the imagination and the heart where rise the upper and nether springs of human action.

The inadequacy of science as a contact-maker between man and the universe is different from the inadequacy of religion and philosophy. All but a few handfuls of human beings have nothing to do with science as pure knowledge. The nineteenth century impacts of science on religion created an emotional hubbub in the churches for a while, and modified a few intellectual formulae regarding geology and biology, but made little if any difference in the deliberate relationships of organised religion to daily human life. But the moment science began to *do* things, to put into the hand of man

the means to larger experience, good and bad, it began its climb toward the ascendancy that it has now reached in human affairs. Today humanity at large cares nothing for scientific truth but cares everything for scientific power. The result has been so great an acquisition of mechanical control over the needs and experiences of the present moment that vast numbers of humanity in every religious area have ceased to be interested in unverifiable events in the past as a condition for the attaining of an uncertain future felicity, and have ignored or dethroned religion. Science has *done* things, and threatens to supersede the do-nothing phases of life. It has, to a vast and increasing number of people, become their religion. But the worship of the externals of science is no less idolatrous than the worship of persons or books or images which science decried; and the religion of science has included in its Pantheon divinities more horrible and cruel than any created by the unsophisticated aspiration of humanity in the past. Science has achieved a spurious ascendancy by a mere simulation of the creative doing which is the condition of life, cosmic and human.

The question arises, then, whether there is available to humanity any means of attaining a more complete relationship between his own life and the life of the universe than that which religion, philosophy, or science affords. Let us, as a preliminary to an endeavour to answer the question, note certain features that may be taken as common to both phases of life, human and universal.

The continuity of the life of nature is assured so long as its creative forces preponderate over the

destructive. Creation is maintained by an arrangement which confers on its constituent parts an external distinctiveness; maintained also by rhythmical movement which ensures living continuity, and by integration which raises potentiality in the parts to achievement in the whole. Under conditions inherent in its own nature, life runs its course as a river between the defining banks of form. What, from the point of view of the river, might be regarded as limitations, and offensive to its ego-sense, are, from the point of view of the geographer, the means whereby water in general attains the distinctiveness, the beauty and the power of a river. Such, too, are the conditions to which human life must conform if it is to attain to the fulfilment of its own inherent possibilities, and in doing so attain to its fullest possible measure of community with the life of the universe. It must find for itself a medium of communication between the individual and the group and between both and the cosmos; a medium at once vitally creative, emotionally responsive, mentally aware, materially competent, through which it will reach the unhindered exercise of natural power, from which exercise, as Aristotle saw, comes the experience of perfect pleasure. Such unhindered exercise of natural power does not mean either cosmic or human licence. It means the free expression of capacity under accepted inherent conditions, even as the runner accepts the condition that he shall run forwards, not backwards, on his feet, not on his hands, and in the acceptance of the conditions gains the special pleasure that comes of running.

Now when the activity that will give to human life its maximum contact with the universal life is thus described, it will be evident that what is described is really art; that is, an activity disclosing the characteristics of a life within yet beyond itself, in a rhythmical order, within a significant design.

From the exercise of art, as thus described, arises not only the joy of creative activity in which the artist specially participates, but a distinctive pleasure derived by the spectator of art through reaction to certain qualities of idea, imagination, thought, figurativeness, feeling, form, design, relationship, succession, tincture, texture, movement and so on, qualities from which humanity has abstracted an inclusive quality which it identifies by the term beauty.

It must, however, here be observed that, while beauty is an accompaniment of creation in art, and in its highest aspects is a sign of the celestial touch, beauty is neither the primary impulse nor the ultimate achievement of art. Indeed, the representation of the pleasure-giving surface qualities of beauty, when it usurps the place of creation in art, leads to a turning away of both art and beauty from life towards death, even as it has done in much of modern art which, in its sensational and sensual phases, has lost the classical quality of cosmic affinity and dignity. By seeking the gratification of the senses, even of the higher senses, instead of the creative joy of the spirit, much of modern art has not only debased beauty by making it a pander to the lower nature of humanity, but has renounced the true service of art as creator, and

inspirer to creation, and has turned away from its proper office as regenerator of the race to bring the "tempter" to another "fall of man."

The way of escape from this threat of disintegration in art, and its repercussions in social and international disorder, is by the dissemination of joy in creation through art, and the manifestation in art, and, through art, in life, of the inner characteristics of the soul of man and the universe, characteristics which are the essence of beauty. Over-valuation of the externals of the arts is, like over-valuation of the power-producing agencies of science, the worship of images instead of what they symbolise: it is aesthetical idolatry; and idolatry, theological, intellectual, scientific, aesthetical, or otherwise, is the negation of creation, and an invitation to destruction since it sets fixed and unproductive obstacles in the way of the flux of creative life.

One of the most important needs of the time, then, is the restoration of art to its creatorial office and spiritual quality; and along with a spiritually inspired art, the creation of a spiritually illuminated art-criticism; not an exposition of creative activity in the arts that would seek to intimidate art by this or that inadequate theory or personal whim, but an exposition which will be inclusive of all the factors involved in art-activity; a criticism that will evolve profounder canons than those of the past.

Such theories of art as man has evolved in the past are not of crucial importance, though interesting and thought-provoking to study. They have not heretofore

influenced art-creation to any great extent, partly because creation is no more dependent on criticism than the weather is dependent on the science of meteorology; and partly because art-criticism consists largely of the intellectual speculations of individuals who had no full and illuminated direct knowledge of creative experience in the arts. From the point of view of spectators they theorised on finished products of the creative process, and got no nearer the reality of the process than a student of biology would get to the parallel process and experience of motherhood by only studying a child.

To say this, however, is not to reject as valueless the reactions of the lay spectator to works of art; it is only to give them their real value—as reaction, not creation. Art in its completeness is a collaboration between artist and audience. But when, through circumstances outside the essentials of his art (the spur to notoriety or the stress of economic necessity, for instance) the artist is compelled, in the process of collaboration, to submit to the demands of the spectator, then the basic condition of cosmic or human art, creation from within, is superseded by mere production, in caricatures of art, for the satisfaction of external demands that are irrelevant to true art-creation. What is needed here is the collaboration of the spectator of art with the artist-creator, even as the need in life is for the collaboration of the individual and the group with the creative life of nature. For the development of the art-criticism of the future, disciplined and intelligent capacity is needed in order to respond to the inner characteristics of a work of art; to catch its real purport ; above all, to

participate not only in the specific idea or feeling expressed in the work of art, but to touch the creative joy of the artist.

A necessary help towards a true collaboration between creator and spectator is the observation, by creative artists, of their own experience of the creative process, and the free expression of their reflection on such experience ; for, as Kuo Jo-hsu, the Chinese painter of the twelfth century, truly said : "The secret of art lies in the artist himself." He is, by actual participation and essential identity of experience, in touch with the universal creative process, and has no need for the makeshift of argumentation or speculation.

An epitome of the creative confessions of the artists of Asia who have kept to the Asian tradition would, I am convinced, be of more value to the understanding of art than all the argumentation on the matter since Baumgarten, in the middle of the eighteenth century, under the term aesthetic, deflected the occidental philosophy of art on to the left-hand path, by limiting the process of art to the external imitation of nature, and by making the aim of beauty, as generated by the arts, the imparting of pleasure and the stimulating of desires.

The artists of China and Japan lived close to the creative life of nature, and tried to relate their work to its movement rather than to its appearance. The first canon of classical Chinese art is "rhythmical vitality." In the long history of the arts of India, personal confession of creative experience by the artists is rare, mainly because of their daily consecrated preoccupation with the

expression of cosmic conceptions in which personal consciousness became a matter of no importance.

In the ordinary literature of occidental art there is little expression of personal inner creative experience, though there is considerable reflection by artists on the phenomena of their art, and much material for consideration by the coming higher art-criticism in the writings of, for example, Leonardo da Vinci, Wagner, Shelley, Edward Carpenter, Pirandello the Italian dramatist, and George Grey Barnard the cosmic-minded American sculptor.

The complete exposition of the reality of art-creation has probably only reached its true beginning in our time, when research into the mystery of human nature has disclosed forces and capacities and processes formerly unknown, or, where known, concealed; and when the new science of psychology has uncovered the hitherto hidden workings of the mind.

Today, too, the direct expression of creative experience and reflection thereon has reached a stage of awareness of itself and its import not reached before. No book —certainly none in the English language—has uncovered with such frankness and fullness the open-eyed experience of the creative powers working behind the art of the poet as *Song and Its Fountains* by the Irish poet, AE. An epoch in the understanding of the deeper aspect of music has been opened by the book, *Music Today*, by John Foulds, an eminent English executant and composer. The book by Cyril Scott, an English pianist and composer, *Music : the Secret Influence Throughout the Ages*, indicates

the power of music in the subtle modification of human society. Claude Bragdon, the American architect, has given architecture and decoration profound interpretation. The Russian and Belgian painters, Nicholas Roerich and Jean Delville, have published much personal disclosure of art-experience : and there are others.

But for bringing about the complete collaboration of the spectator of art with the artist, through which will come the liberation of art from inadequate notions as to its nature and purpose, and the restoration of art to its true work of relating human life to the cosmic life, the ultimate means is the bringing into existence of a race endowed with the capacity to respond to the real force and significance of works of art by being themselves participants in the creative process of art. This, obviously, can only be done when art-creation forms an integral daily part of the education of every individual. It also means a drastic revision of current ideas as to the nature, purpose, and method of education.

To those who respond with full realisation to what has been said above, it will appear no exaggeration to add that there is no hope of any radical improvement in the present state of human affairs until an effective proportion of the people of the earth have become artistic, in the sense of expressing in their daily lives their personal rendering of the creative movement of life, in a creative order, within a creative design, and singly and in groups have made themselves powers in the "art of life," in the re-creation of human society on a basis of creative art and its qualities. However the present

lamentable condition of things the world over may be held to have been brought about (through economic necessity, national egotism, individual ambition, racial antipathy, or otherwise), it is ultimately due to the fact that the heritage of fear, greed, jealousy, and sense-gratification that man has brought with him from his animal stage of evolution (and in some senses made more animal than the animals themselves), has not yet been brought under the control of his slowly emerging spiritual nature. Under the influence of that spiritual nature, man has made, through specially endowed members of the race, repeated attempts to touch the creative reality of his life through art. But his ascensive efforts have been periodically frustrated by the downward pull of forces generated by groups who, through the successful exercise of appeal to the lower nature of humanity, assisted by a social organisation based on exploitation instead of brotherhood, have debased the creative power and deflected the interest of humanity, and today have done so over an area and to a depth never before reached in human history. This descensive movement can only ultimately be checked and turned back by universalising creative art in education, and, through education, in organised human life.

It is possible that considerations such as the foregoing may be regarded, by those to whom they are unfamiliar, as remote from the economic and international necessities of the present portentous crisis in human affairs, or may even be regarded as allurements away from what some may consider the urgent need of finding a way out of the conditions that appear to be on the verge of

a world disaster. It may, however, be pointed out that, in a situation muddled and vitiated by the complexities inherent in all self-centred action, which is the only action that appears to be valid today, no one of the expedients that have been put forward for dealing with this or that aspect of the situation can bring about any permanent betterment, since none of them on a close scrutiny is found to touch the fundamentals of free, creative, unified life through which the beneficent potentialities of human nature can be evoked. The world is as it is because its leaders lack the spiritual vision of the unity of life and the community of its forms ; and because the peoples of the world are denied a mode of life that would liberate their creative impulses into purifying and ennobling expression in the rhythmical order and within the significant design of art.

Forty years ago, Tolstoy, approaching the problems of that time, in *What Is Art ?* exclaimed : "The task of art is enormous." It is much more enormous today after a decline in the quality of life and art inherent in the circumstances which he contemplated. But his summary of the matter, in its essentials, is not affected by time, though his remedy, if it could have been applied, would have proved ineffective because of the limitations which his temperament and environment imposed upon it. Tolstoy said :

> Through the influence of real art, aided by science, guided by religion, that peaceful cooperation of man, which is now obtained by external means—by our law-courts, police, charitable institutions, factory inspection, and so forth—should be obtained by man's free and joyous activity. Art should cause violence to be set aside. And it is only art that can accomplish this.

Tolstoy's definition of "real art" was an art that communicated feeling; the religion which, according to him, was to guide art, was the simplest form of Christianity, the ideal of human brotherhood as preached by Jesus Christ. But to restrict art to the communication of feeling (and the feeling regarded by Tolstoy as appropriate to good art was mainly a humanistic sentimentality) is to cut it off from vision and creative *ananda* (bliss); to rob a river of its full force by shifting its spring to a point too near its exit. To limit the guidance of art to the doctrine of a single religion is to isolate art, guided by Christianity as Tolstoy conceived it, from the arts inspired by other formulations of the religious instinct of humanity, from the exquisite art of Buddhist Japan, the luminous art of Taoist China, the interpretative art of Hindu India.

The coming spiritual art-criticism, bettering Tolstoy's high claims for art, will, as Shelley did in *Prometheus Unbound*, declare the arts, irrespective of theological distinctions, to be man's true means of fulfilling his real nature as creator, since they put him in contact with the creative life of the universe, and give him the constant opportunity to experience what the English poet laureate, John Masefield, in *Biography*, calls "those glittering moments" in which

> All may be imagined from the flash,
> The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning-gash,
> Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
> Light to send out to men in song and book.

That, in the phrase of a creative artist with spiritual vision, is the essential service to which art is now called—the

expression of the vision of the "cloud-hid god-game" of the cosmic life and its characteristics, and the translation of that vision into the "art of life." Such vision of reality through art cannot remain an isolated activity; it has in it the power not only to use the intellectual, emotional, and material media of its expression, but to transform them into its own likeness—to vivify and exalt feeling and its expression in religion, illuminate thought and its expression in philosophy, purify the expanding sensory apparatus of the individual and its expression in science, and make human action a version of the divine activity.

CHAPTER V

# "EFFECT" IN ART

SOME time ago Mr. H. G. Wells was recorded by an interviewer in Hollywood as having expressed the opinion that the "talkie" was the greatest art-form as yet achieved by humanity, and that it would oust all other forms of theatre art because of the immensely greater *emotional effects* that could be got from it.

It would not be wise to take this press cable as being exactly what Mr. Wells said, or even an exact interpretation of what he said. The press of Hollywood is not altogether disinterested as regards the future of the one industry that gives the colony its only excuse for existing; and more things than stark truth have come out of that manufactory of illusion. But the opinion itself, apart from authorship and accuracy, is worth consideration.

The idea of the tremendousness of the "talkie" as a source of entertainment (which is the chief interest of the average human being), perhaps even as a means of education (which is occasionally the wistful hope of the few), has been voiced by others besides Mr. Wells. The point of importance with regard to it, in its present statement, is the reason on which the alleged superiority of the

"talkie" is based, namely, the greater "emotional effects" that can be obtained by it. This very reason, clearly understood, contains, as I shall show, the certainty of the falsification of the prophecy, no matter by whom made, that the sound-and-motion-picture will "oust all other forms of theatre art."

But before dealing with the main proposition that the greatness and the survival capacity of an art depends on the quantity of its effect, let us first enquire as to the validity of the claim that greater emotional effects can be got by the "talkie" than by other forms of theatre art. It is a common experience that human sensibility is apt to become jaded under continuous excitation, and dulled by largeness and complexity; and before the "talkie" has managed to oust the other stage arts, it may find itself up against a demand for simpler, more human, less mechanical means of satisfaction of the mind and the emotions. The intensity or continuation of an effect is never measurable by its external causes. Aesthetical cause and effect move in different though interacting worlds, a world of material causes (things seen and heard), and a world of immaterial effects, or responses, in the inner nature of the spectator and auditor (things thought and felt). The achieving of the inner effect has no essential relationship to quantity or complexity in its causes. Indeed where "greatness" in effect is obtained by quantity and complexity, the effect is not felt in the emotional nature of the spectator but in the nerves and one or more elementary instinctive reactions. The monstrous enlargement of voice that has ousted the fine art of modulated

human speech from the " talkie " theatre, the preposterous exaggeration of posturing by which the " movies " destroyed the beauty of true dramatic gesturing, have nothing to do with " emotional " effects except as agents for the debasing of human expression and human sensitiveness.

Where real " effect " is aimed at, as in the best productions of the legitimate stage, the raising of the voice by half a tone at a critical point in a drama, or a drum-tap at a hushed moment in the Noh-drama of Japan, will make a much more intense appeal to the real emotional nature through the ear than a crowded and agitated stage or an orchestra in full blast ; and half an hour spent in front of a single painting by an occidental or oriental master may pass as much aesthetical pleasure through the eye as a day's tramp through the crowded galleries of the Vatican or the Louvre.

But, to take up the main point of the subject, the radical flaw in the argument for the future domination of the art of the theatre by the " talkie " consists in placing the decision wholly with the spectator, who is the experiencer of the " effect," and ignoring the hunger for individual creative expression in art that is born with all normal human beings. The natural impulse of healthy life fulfils itself in two ways that are common to the aesthetical and material departments of life. One way is in creative expression for the satisfaction of the hunger of the inner nature, and in commodity production for the satisfaction of the hungers of the body. The other way is in enjoyment generated by the appreciation of artistic expression in oneself and others, and in pleasure and

sustenance derived from the normal use of natural and manufactured commodities.

A glance at the economic aspect of creation and appreciation will help us the better to understand the artistic aspect. If, in the world of material affairs, the interests of the producer and the user were identical, production and consumption would be stably progressive, free from gluts or famines, booms or retrenchings, mechanical over-specialisation and human displacement. But the prevailing organisation of humanity for self-satisfaction, instead of self-expression and mutual appreciation, has resulted in a world-wide falsification of the values of life through the encouragement of untrue or exaggerated expedients for increasing demand beyond the normal, and thus stimulating production beyond the actual necessity of humanity. The result of this is the instability and dislocation that have to-day disastrously overtaken the fundamental human relationships that are the most precious things in life. The over-emphasis of *use* in commerce is exactly paralleled by the over-emphasis of *effect* in art. These are entirely artificial reactions to the exaggerated stimulation of both material and artistic consumption applied by middle interests in both cases for purposes outside the true concern of commerce or culture ; for the dividend warrant and the box-office instead of the highest good of both the producer and the user.

The exaltation of " effect " as the justification of any form of art-expression, let alone the " talkie," puts an unnatural distance between the outer details of expression and the inner creative impulse and inspiration ; as if one

placed a greater value on the spicings that may accompany a dish than on the real purpose that it is intended to serve in nourishing the body. This is bad enough as an impoverishing influence on art. But, worse still, the exaltation of "effect" places the authorisation of art in the hands of those whose main interest in it, as spectators, is as a means of gratification whose trend is sense-wards instead of soul-wards ; or as providers whose main interest is profit which seeks enlargement through base and hectic appeals to the human sense of mystery and adventure, and to imaginary gratifications of the senses that lead towards actual gratifications reached through animalised furtiveness and unscrupulous disregard for the best interests of others. This tendency is common to all forms of art when they are used as means of mere gain, and not as consecrated offerings, from the higher nature of the creator of the work of art through the equally consecrated collaboration of the interpreters, to the cultural elevation of the spectator.

Art-creation is an intensely idealistic matter. Any movement by the artist away from the ideal of artistic purity and truth is a movement away from responsibility to the ideal, and therefore towards the degradation of the imaginations and the consequent perversion of the actions of humanity. The term "effect" is a delusive disguise for this process. The true artist may or may not desire to create an effect ; but such effect as he achieves will arise naturally out of his own character and quality and capacity. The mere fabricator of alleged art for the purpose of achieving an effect demanded, not by his own

genius or his artistic equals, but by his inferiors, the exploiters of art and artists for ends lower than those of the creative spirit in humanity, has turned his back on Truth and dug his claws into the visage of Beauty.

The moral of these considerations is not the elimination of the "talkie." A "star" in Hollywood prophesied to me some years ago that the "talkie" would have exhausted its possibilities in ten years. But there is no sign of its dissolution as yet. Another "star" described Hollywood thus: "It arose from the desert; it *is* a desert; it will go back to the desert." Behind these reactions to film-fabrication by men who had attained eminence in true drama was a protest against their being used as mere producers of superficial "effects" instead of collaborators with a creative artist for the conveyance of some fine idea or the generation of some high emotion. The "talkie" will go on talking; but its matter and presentation are likely to be compelled to respond to the rising tendency in public taste which every good optimist hopes for. And when, through an accession of wisdom, or as a result of social calamity brought about by submitting the creative impulse of humanity to the limitation and debasement of merely producing shallow and illusory "effects," humanity comes to the realisation that the crazy destructive excesses of to-day are the inevitable consequences of the deprivation of creative expression in the education of the young, things will change. Art in the real sense of the term will come into its own. And when art, particularly the art of the theatre, which is the synthesis of all the arts, takes its place in a future sane educational system as a

pivotal necessity, then the other arts that are supposed, by the press cable that provoked this rejoinder, to be trembling in fear in front of the opening jaws of the talking dragon, will be discovered on its back driving it away from the precipice of "effect," along the right-hand road towards the artistic regions wherein flourish the fairest flowers and fruits of human creation.

CHAPTER VI

# INDIVIDUALITY, NATIONALITY AND INTERNATIONALITY IN ART

INVOLVED in both the ultimate and immediate problems of life, and art as a constituent of life, are two terms—the unit and the total, the individual and the others. These terms are constants in being ever present. But they are not constants in the mathematical sense, inasmuch as they are not unchangeable, as mathematics requires, but are perpetually undergoing modification, and are therefore, like most things in the universe, paradoxes—variable constants, or constant variants, ground into the stuff of life between the upper and nether millstones of the temporal and the eternal.

In the early stages of human history the relationship between the individual and the others was apparently a simple matter, "the others" dividing themselves into those that were detrimental to the individual's well-being, and those that were accessories to it. Both divisions of "the others" led to the grouping of capacities in furtherance of both the deterimental and accessory purposes. The original human unit found himself, in his successors, a part of a new multiplicate unit which contributed to his

ability to meet the detrimentals, but at the same time put limits to the freedom of his action in fulfilling his own purposes and desires. With the progress of time, the development of the human consciousness, the migrations of peoples, the variations of climate, the interchange of commodities, the interaction of cultures, other group-units emerged, racial, religious, cultural, political, economic, each imposing conditions on the individual, and extracting tribute and service from him. Today we hear, not for the first time in human thought, but for the first time as a demand of human necessity, talk of a new inclusive unit, the unit of humanity.

Within all the similarities and differences that these composite and super-personal units involve, it is observable that the maximum of agreement is found in matters that are related to physical well-being. There is no difference of opinion, for example, on the necessity of a sufficiency of food or other accessories to the pleasure, upkeep and continuance of the body. Differences arise mainly on matters which, while they utilise the tangible materials of life, are in reality rooted in the super-material aspect of life—in mental attitudes and emotional predilections; what may be called the modes and moods, as distinct from the means, of life. In the ultimate analysis all differences arise in the consciousness of the individual. So, for that matter, do the similarities, but we are less conscious of the things that agree with the satisfaction of our needs and pleasures, and accept them without question. The elaboration of civilisation has only added power and variety to the immediate instrument of the

will, to the mind with its capacities of thinking and feeling, and of originating and modifying action by means of its physical instrument.

In the inter-relationships of the individual and "the others" quite a formidable list of repulsions from detrimentals, and attractions to accessories, has been developed and tabulated by modern psychology as forces in the complex and unstable motivation of human action, or as reactions to such action. Until recently these were generalised by one phase of psychological science as rising out of a "sex-complex," hence being rooted in the physical nature of humanity. But there have been a number of students of human nature who have had experiences, particularly in art-activity, which have led them to the conviction that, though much of what has been elicited by experimental psychology may have a sex-basis, the source of human action is in the deeper consciousness of humanity; and action, in its outward movement, operates through what I have elsewhere called a "creation-complex" which includes the observed universal impulse to create in various ways, including sex.

The impulse to creation is the primordial and perpetual source of the external manifestation of life in all its aspects, in the world of nature as well as in the world of human nature. In human consciousness the creative impulse is usually identified as self-expression; that is, the pressing outwards, into some kind of form, of the creative stress in the inner nature or self of the individual. Such expression carries with it the special intellectual and aesthetical qualities and quantities of the individual; and

these are modified by the materials and laws of the chosen form of expression.

In the case of the expressor in any of the arts, three claims are made on him ; the claim of his own inner necessity, the claim of his environment, and the claim of the world. A consideration of what is involved in the three terms, individuality, nationality and internationality in art will carry us towards an understanding if not a solution of the problems involved in them.

In my own thinkings on these and related matters, I have long preserved a clear distinction between the terms personality and individuality. I observed in myself and others a fluctuation of feeling and a movement of thought around my own central persistence as an ego. To my friends I presented different masks at different times and in different circumstances through which I sounded some phase of my total self that operated behind the mask and was not divided by it. To use a musical figure of speech, whatever changes my *swarams* (notes) underwent, my *sruti* (key) was unchanged. The word " personality " came into English through the French from the Latin, as indicating the *persona* or mask through which the hidden actor expressed some transient aspect of a total life. In the creation of an illusion of character in the imagination of the auditor, the mask was only an auxiliary expedient, and ultimately dropped out of western stage technique. The actor was the creator out of the fullness of his own life. That fullness of life was not exhausted in the presentation of one character. On another occasion he would present

another character, and be the same actor. But the second character did not depend on the first character : it depended on the actor who, whatever the number and kind of his created *personalities*, himself remained an *individual*, that is, one who is indivisible.

We have in these derivations of two words a verbal parallel of what I take to be the basic principle of true creative art ; namely, that it expresses the indivisible life of the artist, moving into expression with one or two phases in predominance and the others in subordinate collaboration with them. There is an obvious relationship between certain artists and their times and its interests. Such relationship is usually regarded as that of parental time-spirit and artistic offspring. Sometimes the offspring expresses his age, like certain novelists of today. Sometimes he is, like Shelley, its accuser. My own experience of the literary and dramatic revival in Ireland forty years ago puts the collaboration of time and the artist at about half and half. Some impulse within myself impelled me to renascent efforts in poetry and drama before I knew of the existence of AE and Yeats. But the emergence of an identifiable movement generated the feeling that we were collaborators in a spiritual conspiracy that gave an inner unity to the apparently spontaneous creative expressions of the individuals who found their artistic affinities in the movement.

Whatever be the inspiration or provocation from his era that influences the expressor in the arts, and provides him with the intellectual and emotional incidentals of his craft, that which outlives his era is not *of* his era, but

comes out of the full response of the artist to the fullness of life, though expressed in the terminology of a period and its preoccupations and enthusiasms. Loppings from the tree of life may continue to bear the semblance of life for a while. So may cults, and isms and fads of technique and curiosities of mentality in the arts. But the tree of life lives only as a tree, and not in essays on arboriculture. Where artists have lived beyond their time, they have done so because of the expression of the immortalities, some "touch of the timeless," as AE puts it, and not because of any intellectual formulations or emotional stresses outside themselves. These may have their own longevities, but they are only accessories to creation. The paintings in the Sistine chapel are not famed for their theology, but for the creative art of Michael Angelo. Raphael's Madonna and Child is not treasured as datable portraiture, but for its beautiful portrayal of the artist's imagination of ideal motherhood and ideal childhood. The frescoes of Ajanta are not admired for their want of theology, but for the share of the unknown painters' individual immortality that they transmitted to their works. The secret of art is in the artist, to repeat a saying of a wise man of China long ago. But when one seeks to penetrate a secret, or when a secret wishes to tell itself in the high way of creative art, the artist is no longer self-sufficient : he has to concede some of his vision and impulse to the limitations of the paraphernalia of art-creation. One of these limitations is the second factor in our problem, nationality.

When I was a boy in north Ireland, the term Nationalist was one of the most common on the platform and in the press. In my environment then, fifty years ago, in Protestant Ulster, a Nationalist was (I was taught) a very wicked person, who wanted Ireland to be denied the benefit of being governed by a parliament in England, which knew nothing about Ireland, and was therefore in a position to govern it without prejudice. The slogan of the Nationalist, per contra, was "Ireland a nation," a self-governing unit expressing a restored traditional culture. The anti-nationalist slogan was "Home Rule means Rome rule," which recognised the fact that the nation called Irish contained rival religious interests, and differed strongly on the nature of "kingdom come" and the way to alternative destinations therein. Early in my conscious life I discovered that Nationalism and its reverse were only shallowly rooted in reality; that they were mental abstractions, theories of government held by particular groups of people within a nation.

Nationality, I found on the other hand, as distinct from Nationalism, is vital, not only mental or emotional. It stands for a natural relationship between individual and group based on the essentials of life; not only on a legal relationship arising out of the expedients of life. If the individual is an intelligent entity, the relationships of Nationality will include an interest in the isms of human organisation. Nationality consists of the involuntary relationships of physical make-up, with their mixture of parental, family and racial elements, acted upon by such natural relationships as climatic and geological conditions,

and the stream of traditional cultural achievements and tendencies of the nation or of a group within a nation. This generalisation, like all attempts to summarise the phenomena of humanity and nature, is subject to exceptions, some of which arise from the unknown quantity of the inner nature of the individual.

The application of this to the creative artist presents no difficulty to my own understanding, whatever it may do to the understanding of others. And if I utilise my own experience in illustration of the influence of nationality in art, it is because the matter of creative art, which is the product of the living processes of the creative artist, is less one of argument than of participation.

I was born into an environment in which the earning of one's living, with the hope of by and by being able to make more than one's living, was the chief virtue ; and into a cultural group which, though one-fifth of the population of the nation as circumscribed by geography, arrogated to itself as near five-fifths of the power of government as it could manage. At an early age I showed artistic tendencies that gave me exaggerated peculiarity in inartistic surroundings. On one side I had a leaning towards poetry before I had read a volume ; on another side towards drama before I had seen a play performed, as I had been brought up in the doctrine that the door of a theatre was a direct entrance to hell. On a third side I had an inclination towards painting in a city innocent of a gallery, public or private. At the age of eighteen, because of skill in shorthand, I was private secretary to the Lord Mayor of the city. By that time a public

library had arisen and housed a small collection of works of art. At a mayoral function held in the public library I had the duty of being serviceable to visitors. One of them, the owner of a number of British newspapers and magazines, asked me what a certain painting referred to, a battle on the slopes of a mountain called Ben Madighan. I assumed it depicted some incident in Scottish history. He assured me there was no mountain in Scotland bearing the name. Next day I started a search after the realities behind pictures which I have never ceased. I learned that Ben Madighan was the ancient Gaelic name of the hill that I had seen daily above the ever-growing number of factory chimneys in my native city of Belfast, the Cave Hill as it was called, for the subtle reason that there were caves in the hill. Looked at side-ways the hill resembled a human profile. This was called "Napoleon's Nose" by the man in the street. By the man in the villa it was referred to as "Victory crowned with the Phrygian cap." I discovered also the story of the battle in the painting; an enthralling tale of love and war between ancient Irish tribes.

From the point of view of our topic of nationality in art I discovered also three things which, looked at in the perspective of time, appear to me to have more than personal significances. One was that the local cultural tenets in which I was reared, and which I took for granted because they were endorsed by my mother whom I regarded as the wisest of women, and by my father whom I knew to be among the holiest of men, and were guaranteed weekly by our family clergyman, were only skin deep.

Another thing that I discovered was that my nature responded in profound and inspiring affinity with a native cultural tradition more venerable and attractive than the religious bigotry of my upbringing that had nothing to do with real religion, and the grasping for money and position that had nothing to do with real wealth or eminence. The third discovery was that where the putting of foreign verbal adornments (Napoleon's Nose and the Phrygian Cap) on local features is done out of knowledge it is pedantry, and where it is done out of ignorant hearsay it means that the reality of nationality has been usurped and forgotten. The effect of this forgetting was all around me in dull imitation of extraneous ideas and manners and expression. Plastic art was unknown. The half dozen poets who made the sensational adventure of a joint booklet of verse entitled "Sung by Six" were distinguished in reviews by flattering references to Robert Browning or John Davidson, Dante Gabrielle Rossetti or Austin Dobson. I came into the category of "Keats-like sensibility," though I was not quite sure in my early twenties whether sensibility referred to things of the senses, or to the common sense which my good mother frequently recommended me to pray to God to bestow on me since I obviously needed it to keep me from wasting time in such an unprofitable activity as writing poetry.

My attempt, which I undertook before I knew anything of the incipient Irish movement to get back to an authentic cultural tradition, struck a snag in the matter of language. I awoke to the fact that the literature of that

tradition had been expressed in an indigenous language that had been legislated and penalised out of existence. But scholars were beginning to translate its literary remnants into English. A revival of the language itself was about to begin, but was beyond my horizon as a possible means of creative expression. I determined to get as close as I could to the spirit of Ireland through translation, and to make her legendary lore and her attitude to life the subsistence-material of my imagination for the work in poetry and drama to which I felt called. The story of Ben Madighan became the title-poem of my first volume of verse. I became aware of a movement in Dublin towards a revival of literature and drama, and left my home in Belfast in 1897, at the age of 24, to get in touch with it. I discovered the reality of nationality underneath the differences of nationalism.

When I came to India in 1915 I found a renascent movement in painting in Bengal, and out of my experiences in another country and another art-form understood the significance of the turning of a nation towards indigenous ways of seeing things and depicting them. Ten years later, on a European tour, I was asked in Florence to give a lecture to a club on Indian painting. I declined on the ground that a lecture on painting without examples was impossible. The club insisted that one who had become known as an enthusiastic exponent of a renaissance in painting must have at least some reproductions in his baggage. I had to own that for my private pleasure and the information of friends in Ireland who were interested in my doings I had a few reproductions. The club insisted

that I should dig them out. They numbered forty. Screens were improvised, on which the little coloured prints looked exquisitely impressive on a foundation of brown-paper. My brushing in of the historical background and the foreground of contemporaneous circumstances of the movement was received with complete understanding; and the little exhibition of miniatures, in the city of vast galleries of immortal paintings, gave delight to a large audience of art-lovers, not because they found in them copies or reflections of their own art, but something different, something illustrative of the law of life, the law of inner unity and outer diversity, of internationality in spirit and nationality in expression.

Three years later, in 1928, I took a collection of one hundred and forty original Indian paintings to the western world. In Geneva they were exhibited for a week in the hall of the senior art-institution of the city. The President of the school had a pre-view. He was an elderly artist, confirmed in western oil-painting. He knew nothing of the history of the movement in India, and he did not enquire. He took the pictures as works of art ; and he made three discoveries as he proceeded in his survey of the collection, discoveries which he quietly but with intensity communicated to me at intervals. I have recorded them elsewhere, but repeat them here because of their bearing on the topic of this study. Discovery number one was " mastery " in even the paintings of the student-artists ; number two, the spirit of " consecration " in all the paintings ; number three, behind the paintings " a great civilisation."

A matter that asks for attention, before we consider the three recognitions by the Genevoise painter of mastery, consecration, and civilisation in Indian art, is the argument that, because one cannot speak of national mathematics or national science, one cannot therefore speak of national art. It is true that certain matters, such as the fact that the sum of the digits of any figure or figures multiplied by nine gives nine, or the common experience that heat warms and water wets, assume the guise of universality. But the proving that twice two make four has become a more complicated affair than it was in my school-days; and it is the experience of persons who have lived in both England and India that a degree of heat that would cause prostrations in London would be regarded in the Punjab in July as a cold wave. All abstractions, since they are the formulations of minds conditioned by personality and environment, carry with them the stamp of their conditions, their nationality. It is conceivable that, if the science of numbers had developed exclusively through the oriental mind, certain curious correspondences between digits and sequences and accumulations that the occidental mind has dismissed as fantastic would have been otherwise dealt with. It is also conceivable that if the ancient Irish expedient of non-violent non-cooperation had survived the violence of the Norman invasion, and non-violence had become a settled national practice in all departments of life including that of the laboratory, and had spread to other parts of the world, the procedures, findings and applications of science would have been different from what they are today.

But even if mathematics and science were completely outside the terrain of nationality, this would have no bearing on the question of nationality in art. The arts have their universals as well as the sciences—sound, colour, texture, rhythm, for example. But as soon as the universal creative impulse moves through such expressional universals towards the realisation of its own inner reality by means of outer forms and substances and instruments, in a particular area and era, through a physical vehicle sharing the characteristics of a group, it becomes national; and any attempt to impose on it, or to impose it on, the forms and materials and modes of expression of another equally national art, goes against the law of life, and is doomed to destroy either itself or the art on which it seeks to impose its will.

And now for the three recognitions by a European artist, in the works of Indian artists, of mastery, consecration and civilisation, the consideration of which is simplified by anticipation in what has been said above. We may call these three recognitions, in their broadest sense, the three corners of the triangle of art: (1) the degree of skill in the use of the ways and means of art-expression; (2) the individual impulse and personal touch of the artist; (3) the trends from the past, and their present implications in the environment of the artist. We may term them, *technique*, *temperament*, and *tradition*.

Nationality in technique is the using of materials and methods that belong to the artist's location and the general physique and temperament. Oil painting, with its dramatic quality, brilliance and strength, seems more

natural to the tougher general build, the more pronounced physical energy and quickness of external and internal movement, of the occident than to the orient with its tendency towards detail and delicacy and its lighter sensorium. There are arguments on both sides of this point. But I remember that Japanese attempts at orchestral music appeared to be those of children trying to imitate adults; and that the efforts of the successors of the masters of the *kakemono* (hanging picture) to paint in oils made me both sad and savage by their imitative crudity of touch and unintelligence of subject compared with the technical perfection and æsthetical certainty of their own inimitable national style in painting. I knew an Indian youth of inherent artistic bent who temporarily lost his mental balance through being forced to express himself in western ways, but who, when given the opportunity and encouragement to express himself in traditional Indian ways, reached the mastery that the Genevoise painter noticed, and the joy of freedom to express his individuality in terms agreeable to his nationality.

When such freedom of nationality is attained, the inner spirit finds its way into fuller and finer expression. It accepts natural limitations in substance (wood, metal, stone, etc.) and method (movement, utterance, percussion, etc.) as inducements, not as frustrations. It is not troubled because its outer expressor cannot paint, in the pictorial sense, with a violin, or sing, in the vocal sense, with a brush. But, freed from the unnatural restrictions of external and uncongenial influences, ideas and systems, it attains the most widespread and authentic expression of its

creative impulse, aside from the creations of its men and women of genius.

The third term of our subject, Internationality in Art, recognises the world surrounding and interpenetrating the environment of the artist. The word is sometimes used to mean an artist's working in the way of another group ; sometimes as claiming one way of expression for all the world. But this is not inter-nationality ; it is uni-nationality, which is in effect non-nationality. In order that there may be the relationship *between* nations that inter-nationality implies, it is necessary to have nations ; and the richer and finer the nations, the richer and finer will be the internationality and the general quality of world-art. To seek the uniformity of a spurious internationality is to seek the death of art. To seek the highest national artistic expression in the sense in which nationality has been explained above is to seek the only eligibility for internationality.

The solution of the problem which some see between nationality and internationality in art, lies in the recognition of the laws, that the impulse to art is universal, and should have free course for its expression first in education and afterwards in daily life ; that the spirit behind art is one, and, when art is as common in life as other essentials, will form the basis of universal sympathetic interest between the nations ; but that art in its completeness must include the elements of individual and local distinctiveness expressed in freedom, utilising modes and materials as it may, but never losing touch with national essentials.

CHAPTER VII

# PRACTICAL ART

In the opening talk of a series of radio broadcasts from Madras, of which this is the third, Sir C. V. Raman, the world-famous scientist, referred to "the arts that go to satisfy the needs of human life," and their dependence, in their primitive stages, "on the practical knowledge and skill of those who laboured to satisfy these needs." He also referred to "a different kind of knowledge acquired in another way, of which the exponents were the priests and the scribes, the medicine-men and the magicians, the saints and the philosophers." These were, he said, the ancestors of modern science.

We should misinterpret the distinction thus made if we took it as meaning that art and science are completely separate, for Sir C. V. Raman spoke of the knowledge acquired by the artist ; and knowledge is science. Art is *doing*, science is *knowing*; but neither can be truly itself without the help of the other. Art must not only be practically applied but scientifically understood.

To realise the interaction between doing and knowing, we may imagine the first man (or was it a woman ?) who had shaped a piece of damp clay into a hollow vessel to

hold a drink, finding the vessel dry and break. A second vessel was made, but was made differently out of the experience gained from the making of the first one. He, or she, not only *made* something useful but got to *know* something about the reaction of a particular kind of earth to water. In other and much later words, the science of geology began not far behind the art of ceramics. Similarly, when the first man to discover the peculiar fact that two and two make four, tried to impart his discovery to the man in the next cave, he had to smear two marks above or beside two other marks on the wall of his own or the other man's cave in order to drive the fact home to the other's mind. Further marks, which we now copy and put in art galleries, developed into similarities to objects as well as counters for ideas. In others words, mural painting began not long after the science of mathematics.

From these imaginary illustrations, which must not be taken for history, we may derive an understanding that doing and knowing are, to all intents and purposes, simultaneous in human experience. They are repeated in the life of every child who goes too near a flame and learns that fire burns. But the process begins with doing; and doing is the essential nature of art. "Art," said John Stuart Mill, proposes to itself an end, and looks out for means to effect it. An instant after the first man or woman began to do, he or she began to know. In the story of the Garden of Eden, when the first woman decided that she would get to know what had been forbidden her, she proceeded to do something contrary to the dietetic rule that had been put upon her. On the other hand, as

everyone who has been or is a student knows, it is possible to accumulate a store of knowledge without doing a hand's turn except to accumulate it. The student knows also that, without the test of doing, much of the knowledge is futile. He has to carry it, instead of its carrying him.

It may have been an intuition of the close relationship of doing to knowing that led to the accumulation, through many centuries, of knowledge concerning doing ; knowledge not only concerning the materials which may be manipulated for use or pleasure, and the ways and means by which to do so, but deeper knowledge also as to why one feels impelled to such manipulation, and what happens as a consequence not only to the hands but to the head, not only to the skill which is exercised but to the mental and emotional effects of the exercise.

In this way the science that is involved in art came to be elaborated into the philosophy of Aesthetics. On the other hand, the same intuition impelled knowing individuals to find ways and means of setting some of their knowledge to work. Not all of it would consent to this. Some kinds of knowledge insisted on remaining in the world of argument. Grandfathers in the west disliked the scientific notion of evolution when it was first propounded. Their sons accepted it as a universal law. Their grandsons today are not so sure about it ; some even deny it. You cannot *do* anything with evolution ; you can only talk about it. But in the argument about evolution much was said about the growth of the forms through which

life works, and of the negative and positive, or responsive and active, characteristics that form and life express.

It happened that certain persons found it possible to put together certain phases of these positive and negative forces and make them do things. Electricity, for instance, was caused to collaborate with a wire. In the light that resulted, argument subsided. Admittedly it did not cease completely, for there is much to be said about doing. But in respect of the transforming of invisible force into visible light, *knowing* passed over into *doing*. Science departmentalised itself into theoretical science which deals with knowledge alone, and practical science which puts knowledge to use.

I have stressed this interaction between art and science because, in spite of all that has been written on art, there is still in the general mind a suspicion that art is an affliction of peculiar people and has no substantial value. The suspicion goes even deeper, for it has been observed that, in times of financial stringency which affects so essential a matter as education, the first thing to be retrenched is art, and in a return to financial well-being the last thing to be restored is art. But art is not so trivial a thing as that. Just as science, in its practical aspect, depends for its results on observations, experiments and records made with the intelligence, watchfulness, responsiveness, fineness, assurance, adaptation of means to ends, that are also essentials of art; so is art, in pursuit of its ends, amenable to the knowledge which science has attained concerning the place of art in human activity

and its contribution to the "goods" of life which is the test of practical art.

But before we think of practical art, we must first be clear as to the reality of art itself. We have quoted Mill, and might quote several other writers to the same effect, *viz.*, that art proposes to do something, and sets about doing it. But behind the end that is proposed (the painting of a picture, the composing of a *kirthanam* or melody, the carving of a piece of wood, the writing of a poem, and the like) there is something that asks for satisfaction. We do not do these things merely for the doing of them. In the formula of a Upanishad, we might say: "Not for the sake of art is art dear, but for the sake of the self is art dear;" that is, for the sake of something in the depths of our nature, something that is akin to the creative spirit of the universe, and gives high art the touch of religion. The science of art (not speculative science but experimental science) tells us that in our composite nature there is a capacity to feel, a capacity that for our happiness must be satisfied, and that the proper means of such satisfaction is one or other of the arts. Art is a central necessity in life, an immovable substantive apart from any adjective such as idealistic or realistic, fine art or practical art.

The satisfaction of feeling is one of the most important necessities of human life; more important, some hold, than the satisfaction of knowledge. In the majority of people, indeed, knowledge is sought as a means to the satisfaction of feeling in the provision of ways and means to sense-comfort. Science, from this point of view, would appear to be the servant, not the equal of art. We shall

however resist the temptation that here arises to argue for an artistic reorganisation of life, when the present phase of inartistic conflict is over, as being superior to the scientific reorganisation which some advocate. In any event humanity is not likely to accept one or other alternative however clearly it may be presented by H. G. Wells or Bernard Shaw or Rabindranath Tagore. The future will shape itself out of life's necessities, not out of imposed programmes. At the same time, remembering that the inevitable developments of life come from the qualities and capacities of living beings, we are justified by experiment in voicing the claim that, in the education of humanity, art should occupy a position of at least equal importance with science because of its service in both the expression and control of the most dynamic force in human nature, the force of feeling. It is conceivable that if art had had as much attention as inventive science in the past century in Europe, art would have saved science from the inartistic extremity into which it has fallen in our time ; saved it by the elevation and disciplining of feeling that, at least, would have restrained the application of practical science in the development of means for the slaughter of humanity and the destruction of human achievements, and, at most, would have made such slaughter and destruction, which are the reverse of the artistic spirit of creation and beauty, impossible. There may be those by whom the civilising and peace-promoting tendencies of art, which we have just suggested, may be counted wholly visionary and outside the consideration of practical art. But it must be borne in mind

that the vision of a world-wide influence for good from the practice and appreciation of art is not entirely speculative, but rises from the substantial ground of recent experiment as to the effects of art-activity on the characters of children from whom, and from whose contemporaries, will emerge the feeling and thinking entities who will modify the future of humanity. Such experiments, which I shall indicate later, demonstrate the fact that the influence of art on the formative period of life has been found to be mainly, if not wholly, for good. If this be so, and it is, then art has a practical value over and above the ordinary usefulness which the term practical is commonly supposed to imply.

This acceptance of a practical value in art differs from the view of the modern æsthetical philosopher, Benedetto Croce, that art is "vision or intuition," the productions of the artist being images or phantasms of such vision or intuition. The setting of a higher value than simple usefulness on art differs also from the utilitarian philosophers on art from Socrates downwards. But the difference does not mean the negation of either view : it means the inclusion of both ; the fulfilment of artistic ideals in practice, and the practical evaluation of art not only in terms of the physical use to which its productions may be put, which is the usual view of practical art, but also in accordance with the effect that art exerts on the mental and emotional nature of the artist and the spectator of art.

Touching these three aspects of art—the idealistic, the utilitarian, and the psychological—with a view to

understanding their relationship to art in the fullest sense of the term practical, that is, the putting of the creative capacity of humanity to some useful purpose, I shall speak first of the last-mentioned, the psychological, which has been, until recently, the most neglected aspect of art in modern life. In ancient Greece and ancient India, to name only these countries, it was not so. In the minds of thinkers like Socrates and Plato in the west and the Upanishadic seers in the east, art was recognised as a beneficent formative influence in general life and personal discipline. Later renascent movements restored art to favour as the producer of admirable objects; but such movements ignored its influence on the inner capacities of humanity, on feeling and thought and the character which the qualities of these engendered. It is fairly certain that this failure to attach art to responsibility has been one of the chief causes of modern confusion in art and its sequel, widespread disruption in national and international life. It is a lamentable event that in our time, after centuries of education and scientific advance, the human race, through certain of its groups, has become involved in the most extreme negation known to history of all that art stands for—unity, proportion, balance, creative interaction of parts, rhythm, beauty. But it is a consolation, perhaps a prophecy, that in our time also, as already hinted, has come the most complete scientific research into the reactions that human nature is predisposed to make to art, and that the result of this research demonstrates a power awaiting release, a power which, when fully applied in education and later in life, will

overtake the infections that make for conflict. Such power will naturally, unobtrusively and invincibly reduce the influences of conflict that are passing maladies of the lower nature from which the race is emerging. The power of artistic creation, that is, the indigenous exercise of the higher nature that belongs to humanity by spiritual ancestry, will, in time to come, be the inspiration and the test of the life of humanity. Details of this demonstration cannot be given here. All we can do is to say summarily that the application of psychological science to the practice of the arts, not by digging in clay for a sex-complex, but by liberating the shackled creator in human nature, has established the fact that children with a criminal heredity, and others of normal heredity but with a personal leaning to various kinds of delinquency, when allowed full exercise of their instinct for creation in the manual arts, have been rapidly and completely set free into happy and useful humanity. If "applying knowledge to some useful end" is the meaning of the term practical, then surely the use of art for the purpose of human elevation and happiness is one of its most practical values. And this effect of art is not to be limited to the curing of psychological disease. It logically asks to be extended to all education, not for the production of professional artists, but as an infallible preventive of the spiritual ills that flesh is not at all heir to but that are induced in it by a false environment.

To this psychological effect of art on humanity I may add the further fact that within recent years in advanced clinics various phases of art have become routinary in the

treatment of mental, neural and febrile conditions in the grown-up by the use of colours, pictures, statuary and music. The logic here likewise is that what will cure a diseased condition will also prevent it. But the choice of the colour, picture, statue, or kind of music, here arises, and brings us to another aspect of art to which I have referred, the utilitarian.

Utility is another word for what is meant by practicality, that is, usefulness. But from the point of view of art this does not mean only the serving of a useful end. Art is something additional to the actual ; it serves its own end, the end of creation and beauty. Art does not need the justification of usefulness ; but that which is primarily useful is exalted in its station by the addition of art. Our homes are museums of utilitarian art in pots and pans, lamps and cots, that excellently serve the purposes for which they were made. But it is only when art is added to them in some special shape or colour or ornament that they take on the quality of the artistic, and an areca-nut cutter that would fulfil a useful career in a *pan-supari* outfit, becomes, because of the imagination of an engraver in metal, an object of art for the perpetual admiration of multitudes of visitors each year in a public museum.

Choice here stands between the non-artistic or inartistic, and the artistic ; between the home that is merely home and the home beautiful ; between the packet of sweets oozing fat or sugar in wrinkled and handled newspaper from a bazaar not a thousand miles from Madras, and the patterned kerchief *(furoshiké)* in which, neatly

folded and knotted, teacher and student alike carry their books and accessories to school and college in Japan.

But there is a more subtle and important choice, the choice between the use of art and its abuse or misuse. We make ourselves participants in an abuse of art when we patronise the hawking by itinerant bagmen of pictures that use an inferior art to appeal to the lower senses of men, and in doing so debase the attitude of man to woman, which is the second cardinal sin after the debasing of the attitude of man to God. We *misuse* art when we flaunt a red rag before a bull, as the proverb has it, that is, when we submit a person in a condition of agitated nerves to a colour that tends to increase the agitation. We make a similar misuse of art if we saturate with melancholy music a person suffering from what is known as "the blues." The proper administration of art as a therapeutic agent rests on the choice of suitable artistic means to the medicinal purpose; of stimulating music and poetry and energetic sculptures and paintings where these are calculated to overcome inertia, or of quiet music and poetry and calm images and scenes when the reduction of mental or neural excitement is desired. This is the practical reinforcement of medicine by art.

In this objective use of art in special diseased conditions we have an indication of a still more profound choice, not as between art and non-art but between art and art, between influences for both good and evil that artists can impart to the arts and impart to others through the arts, with the increased tension that belongs to them.

The object of the use of appropriate expressions of art in both instances is to serve the good of the individual. It is relatively easy to do so in physical ailments in which the will of the patient to get rid of tangible pain and discomfort is in agreement with the treatment prescribed by the physician. It is not at all easy to apply the censorship of knowledge to the choice of art in normal adult life on the ground, say, that present pleasure may lead to future pain ; that the unworthy laughter excited by a moving picture at a drunken or foolish act may slacken the self-control and undermine the dignity of the person who laughs. Yet such wise control is essential to the practical application of art to the life of the people.

The ultimate choice between expressions of art that make for human good and those that make for ill, the unemphatic but irresistible censorship of natural good taste, will come after art is given its right place in education, and men, and particularly women, of experience, sympathy, and enthusiasm for the finest things of life, are empowered to use their judgment in the choice of subjects in teaching art to the young ; the choice of wholesome, not sentimental, music ; of elevating, not degrading, poetry ; of normal and beautiful, not distorted and ugly, figures ; of natural, not fantastical, scenery ; of vigorous and humane, not violent and cruel, incidents. The adjustment of art to the best ends is one of the most practical and essential services that education can render to the race.

I conclude, then, that all art is practical art, since the impulse to creative expression in humanity is universal ; and that art has in it the capacity of meeting the various

kinds of necessity that life has implanted in the composite nature of humanity. And so we return to Sir C. V. Raman's remarks on "the arts that go to satisfy the needs of life," but with the added understanding that the needs of human life that art satisfies are not confined to the physical aspect of man's nature. The needs that art satisfies belong also to the intermediate aspect of feeling and thought, and to the deeper aspect, on which the others depend, the spiritual aspect, in which man the artist may become inwardly, to his own happiness, a collaborator with the creative Power of the universe, and outwardly, to the happiness of others, a revealer and translator of the truth and beauty that are inherent in humanity and nature.

CHAPTER VIII

# THE ART OF SYMBOLICAL SPECTACLE

To the usual list of arts (architecture, sculpture, carving, painting, drama, music, dance, literature), India adds the art of symbolical spectacle : her cultural life seems almost to move in a series of processions. There are, of course, processions all over the world, but they are different. There is the Lord Mayor's procession in London, that marks the accession of another man to the Chief Magistracy of the city, and goes no deeper than the event. There is the Orange procession in Northern Ireland which celebrates the victory of a Dutch-English king over a Scottish-English ex-king on Irish soil, and gives to history, through the intensifying power of art, the sounds and colours of sectarian emotion. There are in Catholic countries the beautiful processions at various times which impress on the spectators events in the life of the Founder of the Faith, as in the month of May, or doctrines such as that enunciated in the procession of Corpus Christi.

None of these, however, comes within the special scope of art. To some extent they have qualities that may be termed artistic ; but the first two referred to are

mainly historical, the third wholly religious, and none of them is concerned with the purpose and ways of art.

To realise the place of art in procession, it has to be remembered that, apart from the visible and audible features of art, such as form, design, colour, rhythm, sound, there is the central impulse to express free ideas and general feelings through the external details of art. This is the symbolical element without which there may be artistic imitations but no real creative art.

It is more than likely that the symbolical element was predominant in the arts of the ancient world of the West. Despite the realism of the Bacchic processions, there was an element of symbolical significance that went deeper than the personalities and actions of the ceremonies. Indeed, the realistic presentation of the Bacchic orgies in literature owes as much to imagination as to historical fact.

India is a land of processions. Every day in every way some elongated group of people is moving somewhere, silently or with community song. Many of these processions, bridal, funereal, or otherwise, go their way with only group-intention, caring nothing or very little for the people among whom they pass. But there are other processions that move on an all-India road, like the procession of the Dasara which is the most universally observed symbolical spectacle in India, and has attained world-fame as organised in Mysore State.

What another phase of symbolical spectacle, the Durga puja, is to Northern India, the Dasara festival is to Southern India. Both festivals take place in the first ten days of

the moon of September or October. There are, however, certain interesting differences as well as similarities in the two festivals. In the Durga puja the popular central interest is the story of Ramachandra, the ideal king. The story is connected with the Goddess Durga who assisted Rama in overcoming Ravana, the demon-captor of Rama's wife, Sita. In the Mysore Dasara the conception of divine aid in overcoming evil is expressed in the celebration of the nine nights' conflict of the Goddess Kali with a demon in buffalo guise. In the battles between the powers of good and evil, the demon leaders, Chanda and Manda, were destroyed by a Goddess, a reflection of Kali herself, who was given the combined name of Chamundi in memory of the event. In the passing of time this ancient Pauranic legend was located on Chamundi Hill, at whose foot lies the lovely city of Mysore, and the Goddess Chamundi became the tutelary divinity of the ruling house of the State. The same legend, in a modified form, is remembered in the Durga puja, and the image of the militant Goddess is accompanied by those of the milder Devis, Saraswati the culture Goddess, and Lakshmi the home Goddess, even as homage is made to them during the Dasara celebrations.

It is thought by some students of the religious history of India that this widespread veneration of the feminine aspect of divinity in the universe was originally a harvest festival. In the Durga puja, however, whatever bucolic interest there may have originally been has been superseded by the celebration of the exploits and triumph of Rama. But in the Mysore Dasara there is some reference

to the season of ingathering in the religious exercises through which the Maharaja goes during the nine days (*navaratri*, nine nights) of the festival for obtaining the blessing of the deity on the land and its people. The kingly office is not personified, as in the representation of the story of Rama; it is lived by the Maharaja in the daily and nightly presence of his people. But association with the classical epics is maintained by the venerating of the Banni-tree, as the climax of the superb processional spectacle on the tenth day *(dasara)*, in continuation of the vow of Arjuna to worship annually the tree whose roots had hidden the invincible celestial weapons that he had won by severe austerities until the day of victory *(vijayadasami)* should come.

The celebration of the victory of good over evil, and its legendary association with Mysore, together with the actual presence of the Head of a State which carries on the tradition of paternal rulership, though adapted to modern conditions, makes the Mysore Dasara an occasion of both religious and social significance, combining observances that yield profound universal meanings and applications to the curious-minded, with recognition of a hierarchical order in social organisation. These observances are carried through in an atmosphere of joyful confidence in divine solicitude for human welfare. Good taste has developed the festival into a never-to-be-forgotten demonstration of the art of symbolical spectacle, in which all are participants. The multitudes of the people from all parts of the State who crowd the great area in front of the Palace nightly and who line the route of the

*vijayadasami* procession on the tenth day to enjoy the blessing of the *darsan* (sight) of their Ruler, are as essential in the total effect as the Ruler himself and his official entourage. The festival is also an occasion for visits by persons of distinction from other parts of India and abroad, all of whom carry away with them ineradicable memories of princely hospitality and fascinating entertainment, but few of whom realise the long and picturesque history that stretches from the contemporary festival back to the remotest times.

Part of that history centres round the Dasara throne, which is, indeed, the pivot on which the festival revolves, seeing that when His Highness takes his seat on it, he unites the kingly and sacerdotal offices in being both the Head of the organised life of the State and the ascetic intermediary for divine blessing on the people.

Concerning this venerable object, it is said that a Raja of Mysore in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had greatly helped his neighbour, the Raja of Seringapatam (then Srirangapatam), against his enemies, and that, in recognition of that help, the latter had bequeathed his kingdom and his throne to the Raja of Mysore. It happened, however, that the throne was no ordinary royal seat. Tradition ascribed its early ownership to the ancient Yadu dynasty to which Sri Krishna belonged and from which the ruling family of Mysore sprang. In going to Mysore it was going home, and closing a cycle of history. It was fitting therefore that the Raja of Mysore should raise the ordinary celebration of the Dasara to an occasion of great dignity and ancient

remembrance. This he did in 1610, and his wish that the celebration should be worthily maintained has been more than fulfilled by his successors of three centuries and a quarter.

The placing of the Dasara throne in the great durbar hall on the upper floor of the Palace in a position in which it and its occupant can be seen by the invited and officiating company seated or standing to right and left of His Highness within the open-fronted hall, and by the vast concourse of the populace squatted and standing in the Palace grounds, is therefore a matter of ceremonial importance as well as of careful organisation. Equally important ceremonially is the placing of an image of a lion under the seat of the throne in remembrance of the animal (*vahana*, vehicle) which bore the Goddess into battle against the hosts of evil. On taking the "lion's seat" *(simhasana)* the Maharaja is seen by his people as the representative of the Goddess, and acclaimed with great joy. A further association with the Goddess is made when His Highness, on the first morning of the festival, pays a ceremonial visit to the office in charge of the religious observances of the Palace, where an image of Chamundi is installed. He is clad in a special costume, and wears a consecrated bracelet which he retains during the festival.

From this visit onwards the ten days of the Dasara pass through stately artistic ceremonies that on the surface, in picturesque costuming and decoration and dignified movement, are a constant delight to the eye, and under the surface are solemnised by symbolical recognitions of laws of nature and the inner life of the universe

and humanity. Daily there are purifications of the State elephant and horse, and to these and the State sword veneration is offered by the Maharaja in the presence of the public as traditional symbols of the dignity and authority of the Head of the State whose people and possessions it is his duty to protect. Nightly the officers of the State, in various groupings and ranks, offer fealty *(muzare)* to the Ruler, and tokens representing old-time tribute *(nazar)* are presented and nominally received by His Highness with a touch.

During these proceedings exhibitions of physical skill are given in the open courtyard below the durbar hall, and are watched by His Highness and guests, officers and populace, and by ladies and children connected with the Palace from elevated windows and balconies in side buildings of the Palace. Music is also provided.

On the ninth night a durbar for European guests and visitors is held. This was instituted in 1805, and has become an event of keen pleasure to many visitors from outside the State. On this occasion the British Resident attends. Each participant is presented to His Highness by name as he or she steps from His Highness' left to the front of the throne. A bow or curtsey is acknowledged by His Highness. Garlands and bouquets are distributed. The durbar, though exceedingly simple, is accompanied by so much colour in the impressively decorated and brilliantly lighted hall, and by such a sense of consecrated humanity in the figure of the Ruler seated in view of the vast murmuring multitude in front of the electrically illuminated Palace arched by the mystery of the open sky, together

with the suggestion of ancient happenings and invisible presences, that it takes on a profound and memorable interest.

But the festivities of the Dasara are not confined to the Palace. In the homes of the people ceremonial recognition is given to special beautiful girls as representatives of the Goddess. Books and records are venerated ; so also are all kinds of implements, including such modern innovations as bicycles and fountain-pens ; these being regarded as means of the expression of the cultural function of divinity in the form of the Goddess Saraswati.

The tenth day, the day of the victory of Kali over the hosts of evil, of Durga over the buffalo demon, of Chamundi over the demon leaders, of Arjuna over the enemies of King Virata, in short the victory of good over evil, brings the Dasara festival to a triumphant climax. In the morning the State sword, elephant and horse are sent from the Palace by His Highness to Banni-mantap, a capacious parade-ground three miles away. In the afternoon comes the great procession in which His Highness, seated in the howdah of an enormous and gorgeously caparisoned elephant, proceeds slowly, with the members of his legislatures, his household staffs, and the State forces, by roads and streets thronged with orderly and happy people, to Banni-mantap. Points of view for guests are tastefully arranged. The waiting crowds are amused by caricature figures playing pranks in the roads. At intervals flowers are handed up to the Maharaja and acknowledged by a salute.

Visitors possessing invitations to the final stages of the Dasara in the enclosures at Banni-mantap, proceed there in advance of the slowly-moving procession, and are entertained with refreshments while awaiting the arrival of His Highness. At Banni-mantap His Highness venerates the Banni-tree of Arjuna, breaks the strict ascetic regimen which he has observed during the Dasara, and appears in the clothing and insignia of the Maharaja, gracefully seated on his charger to review his troops. Prior to the appearance of the Maharaja, the various units of infantry and cavalry with their bands have formed up on the outer margin of the parade ground. As the sun sets and darkness increases they disappear from sight. Suddenly, at a bugle-call, the ground is electrically illuminated, and the army, with the Maharaja mounted at the saluting point, accompanied by his Dewan (Prime Minister), secretaries and aides-de-camp, springs into sight—a dramatic application of modern invention to ancient procedure. After the review the guests depart and the procession returns home in the glare of modern substitutes for torchlights.

Thus ends the Dasara at Mysore. But its underlying recognition of Powers behind the spectacle of life, and its deep intellectual implications, remain. Worship has been offered to the Goddesses, Kali, Durga, Chamundi, Saraswati, Lakshmi, conceived as divine guardians of humanity against evil, patron deities of culture and the home. These, however, are not absolutely separated entities. Whatever warmth the religious instinct of humanity throws into their recognition in various locations and at special

seasons, the light of philosophy preserves them from an unreal dissociation. They shade off in that light as aspects of one another. They embody the interacting functions of the universal life which are reflected in the similarly interacting functions of human life. Behind them is the profound summation—so congenial to advanced modern science and psychology—of a collaboration of energy and substance in the production and elaboration of the various aspects of life and its forms. In the Hindu imagination—that faculty of humanity which creates mental and physical images expressing presumed realities—the various cosmic phases of energy are figured as the Gods, and the various aspects of substance and its forms as the Goddesses. The Gods are initiating and inspiring Powers ; but they are inoperative without their executive Power-makers, or Shaktis. Saraswati is the Shakti of Brahma, Lakshmi of Vishnu, Parvati of Shiva. And, just as the masculine Trimurti (triple image) is not of three Gods, but of three aspects of one fundamental Power in the universe, so are the three Goddesses a feminine Trimurti showing three aspects of one Power-maker in the universe. To those unaccustomed to the contemplation of such ideas they may well appear vague and remote. But to those concerned in the Mysore Dasara they are mental and emotional realities, and put under the recurrent spectacle of the festival a permanent foundation of religious and philosophical seriousness.

Though the art of symbolical spectacle in Travancore State had not reached the dimensions of that of Mysore,

it has a variety and significance of its own that are rapidly drawing attention to it. It takes its substance from the traditional ideas of Vedic India, adapts them to its own conditions and temperament, and in its great observances, the Vettai and Arat processions, twice a year, exalts the simple movement of walking from one place to another into an art-ritual by acting on the art-principle that a spectacle without a spectator is a misnomer, and by unifying the mover-on and the looker-on in a symbolical significance that concerns both of them.

To these crucial observances of the Hindu year in Travancore has been added a personal event in the birthday procession of His Highness the Maharaja, and the three coincidental observances aptly demonstrate two main phases of the art of symbolical spectacle, the personal and the impersonal ; that which is concerned with the life of an individual yet recognises a larger life ; that which represents to eye and ear personages and events that are externally related to history (that which has happened) yet embody ideas that are eternal and surround every individual with their meaning.

The birthday procession of the Maharaja expresses the paradox of processional art. Its splendour of appearance, that the orient can attain without vulgarity, has as its centre the figure of simplicity that gives occasion and life to the whole. Beautiful horses walking under their lance-bearing riders with steps so rhythmical that they seem to say that, given a chance, they could contribute their share to the revival of Indian dance ; great gorgeously caparisoned elephants whose brisk

and sensitive steps seem to say that, given two chances, they could do the same without appearing ridiculous; soldiers in coloured uniforms marching smartly with swinging arms; Officers of State in temple dress (bare brown bodies above a white cotton skirt, bare head and bare feet); the insignia of the Temple (umbrellas, symbols, utensils); music; an ornamental palanquin borne on the shoulders of many men; all these symbols and adjuncts of oriental regality are the prelude and postlude of—no, not a climax of grandeur or power in proud pose and resplendent dress, but a slim figure, also in temple dress, still youthful at twenty-six (1940), brown and beautiful, leaning on a cushion in the palanquin, smiling gently and bowing to the quiet multitude that all along the white-sanded processional route covets India's most treasured boon, the *darsan* (sight) of the holy. For be it remembered that the Maharaja of Travancore is not only the compassionate father of his family of six millions, with their various faiths and social distinctions and degrees, to whom he gives all sympathy and freedom of expression, but is also the head of the Hindu Church of his State, and both punctilious in temple observance and an exemplar of the personal virtues enjoined by his Faith, the virtues of gentleness to all living beings, human and sub-human, calm in all circumstances, truth in thought, purity in action. In the birthday palanquin he becomes a paradox so acute as to attain a spiritual beauty that sweeps the heart with purifying emotion.

The other two processions mentioned, the Vettai (hunt) and the Arat (immersion), are two phases of one

transaction that is full of universal truth expressed with impressive art. According to the ancient Pauranic story, Vishnu, as the protector of the universe, set out to hunt and destroy a demon of destructiveness—the old and ever new opposition of good and evil in one of its presentations. The procession simulates the progress of Vishnu to the point when he runs the demon to earth in a forest. The climax of the myth takes place on or near the spot, in front of the Sundaravilasom Palace in Trivandrum Fort, where two hundred years ago an attack, happily unsuccessful, was made on the life of Maharaja Marthanda Varma, "the maker of modern Travancore." Here, at the junction of three roads, a pile of shrubbery represents the forest. At the foot of the pile a coconut symbolises the hiding demon. The hunt takes place at night. At the expected hour, shortly after eight, the approach of flickering high-held torches tells of the coming of Deity on his redemptive mission. There is no music, no conversation, nothing that would raise the suspicion of the demon whose hiding-place has been discovered. Organised rhythmical movement in semi-darkness takes on an acute impressiveness in silence as the religious, civil and military units of the procession, all on quiet bare feet on white sand, move almost ghostily to their places, watched by dimly seen rows of faces of spectators over neighbouring walls. The tense figure of the Maharaja, now officiating as Sri Padmanabha-dasa (follower of Vishnu), accompanied by the Heir Apparent (Elayaraja) of the State, emerges in the space in front of the forest as chief archer of the hunt. Behind him loom three decorated palanquins that have

been carried shoulder high from the temple. One of these bears an image of Vishnu with bow and arrow: it is flanked by images of Krishna and Narasimha, aspects of Vishnu. The slim regal figure in bare body and long loin-cloth, standing out alone, the executant of the Divine Will, receives a bow and arrow from a priest in exchange temporarily for the State sword which he has carried from the temple, and after a moment's adjustment, shoots the arrow into the hiding-place of the demon. Instantly the silence is broken. Evil has been destroyed—blessed anticipation!—music breaks out, and the procession returns in triumph to the temple.

But—and here is what may be taken as the most subtle, as it is also the most practical, point in the procession-drama—the image of Vishnu cannot yet be returned to its place of sanctity in the temple, but must remain outside the sanctuary, on a couch surrounded by foliage representing part of the forest of the hunt, until he can be given a purificatory bath the next day. Though a representation of Deity, the image has suffered pollution by the hunt, and cannot resume its deific position until it is purified. Good, in overcoming evil, has, in the nature of things, to descend to the plane of evil, and in doing so suffers defilement. Its duty done, it must strenuously rid itself of the tendencies and stains that it has taken from its contact with evil. On this universal psychological law, so applicable to human action, particularly in peace following war, a law theologised and dramatised in the Vettai procession at the level of Deity, rests the necessity of the Arat procession of the day following the Vettai.

In the late afternoon the images are carried out from the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple by the three-mile road to the edge of the vast Arabian Sea, escorted by His Highness as Sri Padmanabha-dasa accompanied by his brother the Elayaraja and the consorts of the ladies of the ruling family; with temple accessories; Brahmin Officers of the State in temple dress; Nair Officers in old-time costume of scarlet body-band and turban, plain skirt with sword and shield, descendants of the ancient protectors of the country; cavalry; infantry with band and trumpeters; servants and decorated elephants. The processionists, with the exception of the military and Nair officials, walk bare-headed and bare-footed. His Highness wears only a *dhoti* (skirt) and carries the State sword. The procession reaches the beach at sunset; spectators have lined the way, and surround the place of purification. Preliminary *puja* (worship) is performed. The images are carried to the edge of the ocean, and, escorted by Sri Padmanabha-dasa, are immersed thrice in the water, each immersion being followed by worship. An illuminated procession escorts the purified images back to the temple.

The story symbolised in the two processions is not the only meaning of them. They are perhaps the most exoteric in symbolising spectacularly the triumph of good over evil, the extirpation of that which obstructs the spiritual life, and the attainment of purification and peace through the destruction of the passions. But in a more profound interpretation, in which the temple is a representation of the Cosmos, such ceremonials, carried out

through the art of symbolical spectacle, anticipate the final withdrawal of the external universe into the being of Brahma. Assuredly art has no profounder impulse or vision.

Another form of symbolical spectacle in Travancore may be mentioned, the dance-drama of Velakali, which is performed periodically in the wide avenue leading up to the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple. The dance is a large-scale enactment of the battle of Kurukshetra which forms the background of the now universally known Bhagavad Gita. The rival armies are represented, but with a curious difference. The dancers, of the ancient Nair community, are not divided into opposing groups : they take one side only, that side being, with heroic generosity, the side of the defeated Kurus. The Pandavas, who are given the victory, as told in the epic of the *Mahabharata*, do not raise a finger in the hour into which the dance compresses the legendary conflict, for their parts are given to giant figures carved in wood, and dressed and decorated, after the manner of the epic heroes, in red skirts and beads, and endowed with prominent eyes, abundant hair and long finger-nails. Silently they stand, save one, the eldest, who sits, while the simulated conflict surges about them, advances, recedes, advances again, and finally fades away as the defeated Kurus retire, leaving the field to the victorious and silent Pandavas, and the not so silent crowd of spectators of the symbolical spectacle presented through the art of the dance.

CHAPTER IX

# THE PLACE OF ART IN EDUCATION

HERE and there in these pages the central place that I am convinced art should take in education has been indicated in the consideration of other matters. But as the contents of this book are an exposition of what I believe to be the faith of the artist with some indication of how that faith operates in practice, I shall here make a statement, necessarily brief, of the case for art in education as I see it.[1] My view of the nature of the student (to begin with the first essential of education, which, even in its usual inadequate form, is the last consideration of educational organisation) is that of an embodied consciousness ; an entity consisting (1) of a body through which life has elaborated human history and organisation in its efforts to meet the demands of the body for the constants of sustenance, shelter, and continuity, and for the varieties of these that circumstances demand ; consisting also (2) of a mind through which humanity has sought both by concrete observation and abstract contemplation to discover and understand and use its own capacities and to adapt to both its physical and super-physical demands the

[1] The matter has been presented fully in *A Study in Synthesis*.

substances and energies of its natural environment. Behind this embodied entity stands the real self, in which education begins and to which the results of education return.

But mind has not only its concrete or objective, and abstract or subjective, directions in operation: it has also two ways of approach towards the objective world for experiential data, and two ways of expression of its responses to objective experience—the way of thought and the way of feeling. These two channels of simultaneous take-and-give have been regarded in both oriental and occidental philosophy as activities of one mind. But the mind has become so closely, almost entirely, identified with thinking, that the feeling function of humanity has not, until recently, and still utterly inadequately, been taken fully into account in general education. Attempts have been made to meet the deficiency by educators who have attained educational wisdom, a rare endowment, but their efforts are insignificant in comparison with the need of art for the bringing up of generations of complete human beings.

The identification of the mind and thinking is right: thinking is etymologically the characteristic activity of the mind. But to extend the mind to include feeling to the point of its exclusion from its own needs is wrong; is a false hospitality that has made feeling feel a dependant, even a servant, in another's house, instead of being a copartner in its own. The processes of feeling are as distinct from the processes of thinking as both are from the processes of willing and of doing, (distinct but never

separate) ; and education of the feeling-capacity as such is at least as necessary as mental education and physical education.

The conviction has been voiced among educationists that the education of the mind, to which attention has been almost exclusively given in the past both east and west, has not been a success, as shown by the wretched tale of human history and the present preposterous and ghastly condition of human relations. It is felt that such a lack of success has come about through the denial of the service of aspiration, compassion and beauty to life ; and these are the natural offerings of the emotional capacity of humanity of which art is its special external expression. For want of educated feeling (that is, feeling developed to its finest capacity of response to the impacts of life, and controlled by the inherent disciplines of feeling-expression imposed by the arts), the universal instinctive stretch of human feeling towards enlargement of itself through religious aspiration has been turned from a mutually helpful search for inner experience into the mutually hurtful animosities of sectarianism. The lack of educated feeling has stultified and distorted thought, and pressed certain phases of science through conceivably unnecessary cruelties ; and has degraded the possibilities of co-operative struggle towards finer conditions of life into the atavistic frenzy and ugliness of warfare.

Such convictions are now influencing experiments towards what has come to be called æsthetical education. But this term, like the mind, has its limitations. It is not a creation of educational necessity. It was coined by a

German philosopher, Baumgarten (1714-1762), to distinguish talk about beauty, and incidentally art, from other kinds of philosophical talk. It means looking at beauty from the outside ; whereas the urgent need of education is to encourage and help the young to create beauty from the inside, and, beauty or no beauty (though it is inescapable), to find the best way, the way of art, of realising the creative impulse that is natural to them. What the student, the future citizen, boy and girl, needs is the educational opportunity to express the artist that is inherent in every normal individual ; not necessarily to become a specialist or a genius (these will come and will take care of themselves), but to be a spontaneous maker of loveliness and order, unity and harmony, in their characteristic art-forms, and to carry their artistic influence into life.

This view of the natural necessity of art in education, though anticipated by the ancients, is, I think, peculiarly modern, a result of the development of the science of psychology. It is a curious fact that, notwithstanding the high value that ancient India set on objects of art as helps towards spiritual culture (elsewhere in this book I refer to the high teaching of the *Vishnudharmottaram* and other scriptures), art never got its complete place in either the Hindu, Buddhist or Mussulman curricula. The artist was trained, but not educated. The artistic product was more esteemed than its human producer. Even now, at any rate in South India, we acknowledge the emotional necessity that the musician creates in us by giving him a garland in the auditorium—and his food on the veranda, not

with the guests at an invitation performance, if his name-termination on earth does not permit his eating with those whom he has lifted by his art to heaven.

. Plato did recognise creative art in education, though he was rough on certain kinds of poets. But between him and the twentieth century, education in the occident took no thought for art. Herbert Spencer, for all his educational wisdom, was not wise enough to realise the needs of the emotional nature of the student. Even as near our time as 1917, an American educationist, Dr. H. H. Horne, in *The Philosophy of Education*, had to confess that æsthetical education "is the most neglected feature of our curriculum, and yet it stands as an essential constituent of the child's present and future environment, and is the product of one of the deepest phases of the human consciousness." Little—practically nothing in India—has been done to repair this neglect.

It is not far from certain that such neglect of so fundamental an impulse as that of creative activity, in the preparing of the young for life, will lead to a menacing lopsidedness in the individuals and in the social organism which they collectively make up. The problems of human life cannot, we may confidently assert, be solved, and humanity set free from its sub-human obsessions, until a radical change has been effected in the general attitude and way of living. And this can only be done completely by an education that is itself complete in bringing the impulses and desires of humanity under educative self-discipline equally with the mental and dynamic capacities of the individual.

There is a vague recognition of the need of emotional education in the phrase that is so often used when all else has failed : " What is needed is a change of heart." But the mere sentimentality that the phrase expresses is a feeble thing beside the urgencies of feeling. What is needed is (to use a suggestive figure of speech that is becoming healthily frequent in educational literature) the "canalising" of the floods of emotion, that is, the putting of them under control in definite directions, to the vitalising of thought and action, instead of letting them work havoc on their way to futility or to disappearance in " the dreary desert sands of dead habit." (Tagore.) The digging of canals in young clay is a much easier matter than the blasting of them through old rocks. The canalising of the creative impulse in childhood and youth by art-activity in education is the only pedagogical wisdom.

In an article on " Peace and Education," Dr. Maria Montessori voiced this idea in her clear calm way. Touching on the central element of the threat of war, now lamentably real, she asserted that " the cause of war does not lie in armaments but in the men who make use of them." The fundamental need of humanity in times of crisis, therefore, is an education that will allow humanity to grow up with " a healthy soul, enjoying the full development of a strong character and clear intellect." This implies a complete education ; an education based on the assurance, now strengthened by observation, that its completeness will lead humanity away from the disunity of life produced by a selfish and predatory education to an instinctive order subjectively imposed on human

life by the authority of its own higher nature when it is released into action. This is the ideal of the true democracy through which alone humanity will attain its full stature and expression. All that frustrates it is doomed to the ultimate dust.

Dr. Montessori's reference to "a healthy soul . . . strong character . . . clear intellect" is not a casual phrase: it is the essence of her experience as an educator. It is her response to the inescapable triangle of external human capacities ; (1) the emotional capacity through which the attainments and qualities of the other capacities are fused into the synthetical revelation of character ; (2) the mental capacity which observes and contemplates the phenomena of experience ; these capacities being modified by and modifying (3) the executive capacity of doing.

Through the releasing into life of this synthesis of human capacity, developed to its highest degree, and subjected to its own inherent control, ugliness would be intuitively eliminated from life. "War," says Dr. Montessori, "would not be a problem at all for the soul of the new man" (and I would add for clearness, the new woman) ; "he would see it simply as a barbarous state, contrasting with civilisation, an absurd and incomprehensible phenomenon ;" for, in her view, the child, educated in this way, is "a passionate lover of order and work." A more illuminated age than ours may count it the chief sin of the renascent barbarism of the dictatorial powers of Europe that it drove the semi-civilised democracies back from their small but hopeful approach towards the attainment of a true technique of peace to the inhuman and

uncertain expedient of meeting the Devil with his own implements and methods.

If we put Dr. Montessori's diagnosis of the child as a "passionate lover of order and work" the other way round, and say that the child who is liberated through a complete education is a passionate lover of work and order, we have, I believe, a statement of a law of human life that is therefore a law of education; the law that life perpetually seeks expression through human activity, and simultaneously safeguards itself against dissipation in futility by imposing on action, and by imparting to the objective result of action, the orderliness of intention, design and unity.

This love of work and order is not only true of children who have had the opportunity of free expression, a small but growing group of fortunates: it has been found in certain special educational institutions to be equally true of youth whose activities had been distorted by its environment into individual delinquency and social disorderliness. Given the opportunity to express the energy of life through the order-inducing media of art-crafts, "delinquents" have recovered the fundamental necessity of work and order which Dr. Montessori and other sagacious experimenters in education have observed, and have been transformed into happy and useful citizens, as I can testify from observation of schools in the United States of America whose pupils were diverted to them through the police courts.

Dr. L. P. Jacks, whose experience and thought place his utterances as nearly beyond dispute as any utterance

can be, lays the responsibility for the disorder in human life at the door of imperfect education in his pre-war book, *The Education of the Whole Man*, a title that bears the regrettable and dangerous lack of wholeness in its exclusion of woman, which, though not intended by the author, unwittingly weights the scales in favour of the disastrous masculine complex that has wrought most of the evil that has haunted and is still haunting the world. Dr. Jacks says: ". . . the practice of perfection is not initiated by learning the three Rs, nor by anything which proceeds from these useful acquisitions. It begins much deeper down, in acquisitions which should be called 'elemental' rather than 'elementary.' For want of good sound 'elemental' education which aims at developing the fundamental virtue of self-control . . . democracy is moving towards a disaster which elementary education of the book-say and hear-say type will rather hasten than avert." Those who, in their search for the causes of the present parlous condition of the world, not excluding India, would also find fundamental ways towards international sanity, would do well to ponder the implications of this declaration. The failure of educational authorities in India to fulfil their first responsibility to the creative spirit in humanity (women as well as men) by making art-activity the central item in the school and the central influence in the college, is the most sinister portent in the life of India today; for the absence of the sensitiveness, control, order and reverence, which art in education is calculated most effectively to induce, vitiates all other phases of education and life.

The "sound elemental education" which Dr. Jacks advocates is the education of the whole individual, including the individual as creator. He says: "The whole man is a creator. Educate him in his wholeness as such, and the inner vacancy of his being, which hungers for creation, and can never be satisfied with anything else, will be filled." This naming of man (humanity) as creator, is just putting into another form of expression Dr. Montessori's declaration that the liberated child is a lover of work and order. For creation is orderly work, something done, and done under the laws of its own nature. Liberation through creation (not a spurious development through second-hand knowledge) is the sure way to individual happiness through the release of inherent creative tension into the conditions inevitably governing created forms, conditions that, because they are inevitable means to happy achievement, are accepted, and in their acceptance induce in the creator in the arts "the fundamental virtue of self-control."

"This means that art (always understood in its catholic sense as the most excellent doing of what needs to be done) must find a larger and more central place in educational practice. It means that increased weight must be thrown into awakening and training the sense of beauty, the greatest of our lost inheritances, but the best of all prophylactics against vice, the most vitalising and uplifting of all the positive motives that interest and actuate the whole man."

I put the foregoing assertion of Dr. Jacks into a separate paragraph to emphasise its crucial importance.

It not only demands the centralising of art in education, but sets out the two main influences of art-expression on human nature, (1) as prophylactic or preventive of vice in all its forms, (2) as therapeutic or curative agent where vice is already active. For years I have preached this doctrine of "Art as Medicine," and accept the opportunity of this book, and the encouragement of Dr. Jacks' parallel advocacy, as an excuse (if an excuse is needed for the restatement of essential truth) to return to the subject.

The therapeutic influence of art in education is of tragic necessity in the present diseased state of humanity. But the mere application of remedial measures to enable a diseased individual to repeat the actions that produced the disease will not lead humanity to any kind of health. The ultimate need is a true prophylactic—not the ingestion or injection of foreign entities into the emotional stream to create a state of armed neutrality oscillating between times of warfare among themselves and other foreign entities; not this, but the clean-ridding of the imagination, the emotions and their mental and physical collaborators, of every disease-producing element, by leaving them open to the detergent flood of inspiration and illumination from the lofty springs of man's higher nature that finds its true outlet in the arts.

In the application of art in education as a creative and preventive agent, it is necessary to observe the quality and quantity of the application, as in the science and art of medicine. It was, for example, no mere whim that caused the Vedic dharma to forbid secular music to the

householder *(grihasta)*. The wise men and women of old knew that there are tendencies in human nature that need no artificial stimulation. It would be well for humanity today if those in authority, particularly in education, would recognise and act upon the fact that the present increasing subjection of adolescent youth to the impacts of triviality, vulgarity and sensuality in popular entertainment and cheap publication is merely striking matches among combustibles. This is the most general and most degrading misapplication of art in life. An art-conscious generation would naturalise it by automatically turning their educated taste away from it.

The virtue of individual expression is the releasing of impulses which, if pent up, will find subterranean outlets under pressure and in descending directions. The daily item of art-activity is, where it exists, a daily discharge of complexes which leads to a true, and at present rare, normality of life. The danger, on the other hand, of individual art-expression, is a possible excess of development to the extent of exaggerating valuable individual characteristics into merely personal idiosyncrasies, distorting a natural bent into an unnatural pose, and degrading a healthy self-evolution into an unhealthy self-conceit. This danger would diminish towards elimination with the growth of ability, taste and critical acumen among children at large : in any event exhibitionism in the arts would be no more reprehensible in its early stages in education than in any other activity.

The development of art in education will involve ready access to art-galleries and museums. Where this

is not possible, collections of good copies should be made. Educational authorities should organise peripatetic exhibitions from place to place accompanied by a demonstrator. All this means the provision of materials and the evolution of a new type of teacher. It also means expense, and the question, How can such expenditure be even begun to be thought of in face of world-wide financial depression ? A glib answer might be the contra-question, How does the world find money in cosmical figures for art's antithesis, war ? But this question does not go deep enough. There is a more roundabout but more fundamental answer ; namely, that financial depression, where it really exists, is the sequel of circumstances (false economic relations between individuals and groups together with colossal wastage in useless conflict), circumstances that could not have arisen if the education of the young had not produced generations of unbalanced, self-centred, pugnacious individuals, instead of all-round, cooperatively disposed, and peace-willing human beings such as would be produced by an education in which creative art was an integral item. Expenditure on art in education is an investment that in less than four generations, if it would not liquidate the world's national debts, would at least prevent them from growing.

I repeat, by way of conclusion, that the main flaw in education today is incompleteness, in not catering for the full nature of humanity. Others put it otherwise. Sir S. Radhakrishnan, in a convocation address as early as 1934, said : "There is a remarkable agreement among educationists today that the system of education requires

drastic revision from the foundation to the flagpole. It is out of date and unsuited to modern conditions, and involves a colossal waste of intellect and energy." With the necessity for drastic revision I agree. But the statement carries important implications. That which grows out of date does so because it was created to fulfil the requirements of a former date. Nothing that is ultimate ever becomes obsolete. If education is now going to be changed merely to suit the needs of our date, it also will become out of date, and the more rapidly so because of the rapidity of change today. Education is wrong, not merely because it does not fulfil superficial human necessity to-day, but because it has not got down to fundamentals. It will always be wrong until it does so. And while education is wrong, the conditions of life will be wrong. From this vicious circle there is no escape round its circumference. There is escape only in ascending and viewing its essentials; not this or that contemporary need, but its "eternal verities,"—that is, the nature and complete educational needs of the child, not only as thinker and doer, as current education sees the student, but also as feeler and creator—if humanity is to be saved from the disastrous consequences of half-education and helped into the civilisation that can come only as a consequence of complete education.

CHAPTER X

# THE NATURE OF BEAUTY

BERNARD SHAW, in his "Appendix instead of a Bibliography" to *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, tells us that when he essayed the writing of a letter to a lady explaining socialism to her, he found that none of the piles of available books answered the simple question, "What is Socialism?" "The other simple question, 'What is Capital?' was," he tells us, "smothered in a mass of hopelessly wrong answers, the right one having been hit on (as far as my reading goes) only once, and that was by the British economist Stanley Jevons when he remarked casually that capital is spare money."

If I were to approach a study of Beauty by saying that none of the piles of available books on æsthetics answered the simple question, What is Beauty? and if I were to remark casually that beauty is spare feeling, I should be uttering the same errors of omission and commission as those of Mr. Jevons that deceived Mr. Shaw by their delusive aptness.

No one but a wise man and a genius could possibly mistake capital for "spare money." If Mr. Shaw had accompanied me on a tour around India in search of spare rupees to keep a college going, he would have learned that capital is money that the owner has so tightly locked up in investments that he has none to spare for even such a worthy purpose. Money to spare is money that is disengaged : capital is money at work : it may or may not make money to spare or to invest ; but while it is spare money it is not capital. If all the cash in the world, tied up as capital or loose as spare money, were piled in a heap, it would be of no more use to humanity than a heap of potatoes ; less indeed, for the potatoes would sprout and spread, but no number of coins or currency notes bearing engravings of kings and queens have ever disclosed an aptitude for progeny. For money to serve the purposes of capital it must fulfil itself in productive activity. For feeling to serve the purposes of beauty it must do the same : it must declare itself in beautiful things.

In other words, and using the foregoing analogy merely as a diving-board, just as we cannot know anything of the nature of capital except through its operations, neither can we know anything of the nature of beauty save through its expressions. But Plato asks us how on earth a thing could be beautiful unless there was first beauty to make it so. Then Kant breaks in and says : "Both right—and both wrong : for if both the æsthetical realists who find beauty only in objects, and the æsthetical idealists who mistake their own notions of beauty for the

thing-in-itself, absented themselves from existence, the problem of beauty and beautiful things would not arise, since it is in your consciousnesses that it arises : no consciousness, no beauty—no anything, in fact."

This is, I think, a fairly plain way of indicating the complexities involved in the apparently simple question, What is Beauty? We could, of course, give it a highly academical flavour, like the following :

> If beauty be a relation to us, it remains to determine what that relation is, and further, if the relation be one of expression, whether what is expressed is reason or will and desire. If beauty be a quality of things, it remains to determine what that quality is, and further, if the quality be an interrelation of parts, what interrelation. To this last question no very clear answer appears. The suggestion that it is an interrelation analogous to the interrelation of the parts of the universe gives more warmth than light.

It was not I but Professor E. F. Carritt of Oxford who uttered these words, in the Preface to his most useful compilation of *Philosophies of Beauty from Socrates to Robert Bridges*. His depreciatory reference to the idea that there could be no quality in external objects that could be called beauty unless it had a counterpart in the universe, on the ground apparently that warmth is somehow inferior to light, suggests that Professor Carritt had forgotten that the philosophy of beauty is the philosophy of feeling which naturally exhibits more of the warmth of vitality than of the "cold light of reason."

We are no nearer an answer to the question, What is Beauty? Indeed it would almost appear that there was much good sense in the proverb, "Ask no foolish questions and you'll get no foolish answers," and that the

best answer to the question, What is Beauty ? is a silence like that which is said in the Christian scriptures to have followed the question, " What is truth ? " But such silence need not be a vacuum : it may be the silence of two bereaved friends who have no need to ask of each other, " What is sorrow ? " or of two spirits who have discovered one another, and have no need to ask, " What is love ? " In other words, beauty will only be truly apprehended as an experience that includes both feeling and thought.

The separation of feeling and thinking in any consideration of the nature of beauty will only divert us on to paths along which singly we cannot hope to approach the mystery. We might get somewhere if we rescued æsthetics from the Department of Philosophy in the Universities, and put it in the Department of Creative Arts (if such existed) where individuals participating in art-activity might conceivably light on the secret of the nature of beauty through creating beautiful things, and be helped to exposition of their discovery by the study of the intellectual speculations of others. Some degree of participation in art-creation is a necessary qualification for anyone who feels moved to seek an answer to the question, What is Beauty ?

The rarity of such participation by æsthetical philosophers in the past is probably the cause of the indeterminateness of their argumentation. Mr. R. G. Collingwood, of Oxford, expresses the same conviction in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art.* He asserts that the development and discipline of the " æsthetic

powers" must precede the laying down of æsthetical law. It is not sufficient, he holds, to admire pictures and music : "the student must learn to draw and compose. Without this artistic training the philosophy of art must perish for lack of matter ; the philosopher is trying to reflect without having anything to reflect upon. This," Mr. Collingwood says, "is an extremely common fault in the books written about art by philosophers and psychologists. The notion that it can be mended by psychological observation of other people's experiences is a childish blunder. On the other hand," he goes on, "books written by people whose artistic experience is profound often fail through lack of training in philosophical thought." For this training for philosophers of art Mr. Collingwood advises the study of general philosophy, not of æsthetical philosophy only. However that may be for art-philosophers, there can hardly be any doubt that some knowledge of what has been thought by others on the problem of art and its relationship to beauty is essential, and sufficient, to raise the artist or the teacher of art from being a mere artisan and copyist to being an intelligent creator and evoker of beauty in art.

The development of education has not brought it to the point of providing philosophy as an obligatory item for students of the arts, or art as an obligatory item for students of philosophy. Hence we have the material for an æsthetical cartoon showing Professor Collingwood (*Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*) on one side laying down the law that "psychological observation" in æsthetics is a "childish blunder," and the Earl of Listowel

(*A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics*) on the other side laying down the law that " the main problems of æsthetics . . . can only be satisfactorily handled by those skilled in the methods of introspective psychology."

Were we to take it that these assertions of recognised expositors of æsthetical philosophy were mutually destructive, we might justifiably feel inclined to pack up and depart muttering with Socrates (*Hippias Major*), " Upon my word, Hippias, beauty has given us the slip, and every chance of knowing what in the world it is has vanished." But Socrates, being a wise man in large spots, adds : " Still, let us stick to it a little together. I still have hopes that the mysterious nature of beauty will be revealed." And we, being also wise, though perhaps in smaller and fewer spots than Socrates, shall stick to it a little together in the same hope and with the gratifying sense of being in good company.

We begin with Socrates himself. Socrates had two contemporaneous interpreters, Xenophon (430-350 B.C.) and Plato (428-348 B.C.). According to Xenophon, Socrates decided that " everything is good and beautiful for whatever purpose it serves well, but bad and ugly for what it does not." Plato reports Socrates as defining beauty as " profitable pleasure," that is, as existing in objects that are at once consistent with their intended use, and that give pleasure along with efficient service. Xenophon gives us a detail of the æsthetical utilitarianism of Socrates in the latter's answer to a question, Is a dung-basket beautiful ? " Of course it is," Socrates answered, and added, " and a golden shield is ugly, if

the one be beautifully fitted to its purpose, and the other ill." It is fairly certain, however, that a collector of beautiful objects, confronted with these two articles of use, and applying the test of this early pragmatist, the test of practicality, would reject the basket for reasons outside its usefulness, reasons hygienic and olfactory, and accept the other for equally extraneous ocular reasons.

But this is too bald a summary of the æsthetical idea of Socrates. His utilitarianism was a much more elaborate matter than what a basket and a shield could express. It set clumsiness, harshness, discord, debauchery, meanness and vulgarity on one side as characteristics of ugliness ; and virtue, grace, wholesomeness, health, kindliness, fellowship, harmony, reasonableness, on the other side as characteristics of beauty, characteristics which may at first sight appear to be purely human, yet are translatable into the qualities of art.

Plato shared the pragmatic view of Socrates with regard to beauty, but he applied the test of practicality from another direction ; not from the direction of a usefulness that is decided mundanely, but of a higher usefulness in making the types of earth respond, and ultimately correspond, to the archetypes of heaven. He sets out his transcendental pragmatism in some detail in the following passage from the *Timaeus*.

God devised the gift of sight for us that we might observe the movements which have been described by reason in the heavens, and apply them to the motions of our own mind, which are akin to them, so far as what is troubled can claim kinship with what is serene. For so we might learn a lesson, and by entering

into the ideal nature of that design and imitating the perfect pattern set by God might adjust thereto our own random motions. And the same holds good of voice and hearing ; the Gods bestowed them on us for the same end and purpose. For that is the end of speech, which it serves more than any other faculty. And as far as vocal music goes, it is given us to be heard for the sake of melody. And melody, since its movements are related to the changes of our own souls, is to be valued, if a man use his mind in art, not for irrational pleasure, as is the fashion now ; rather it is given us to help us in ordering and assimilating to it the discordant motions of our souls. And rhythm, again, was given us from the same source and for the same purpose, to help us in dealing with what is unmeasured and chaotic in the minds of most of us.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) does not help us much as regards the nature of beauty. We may, if we have a mind to, draw some inferences from his famous passage in the *Poetics* on Tragedy : " Tragedy is an imitation of an important action which is rounded off and has a certain size, the language being beautified in the different styles in the different parts. It imitates actual deeds, not by means of narrative ; and by pity and fear effects the purgation of such emotions." The last phrase, which is one of sixty and more versions and paraphrases of the original, has taken its place among the proverbial utterances of human genius. Yet, it may be that " all we need to know " about at least the appearance of beauty is pressed into Aristotle's definition of the " essential characters composing beauty," namely, " order, symmetry and definiteness."

The contribution of classical thought to the central problem of æsthetics, the nature of beauty, may be summed up as æsthetical monism, a search, congenial to the

mind of ancient Greece and confirmed if not inspired by one aspect of the classical thought of India, for a single explanation of everything. Socrates sought for the explanation in the mind, Plato in a super-mind : his immortal passage in the *Symposium* is too well known to require quotation ; or, if not known, should be turned to and pondered over.

Plotinus (205-270 A.D.) known as the Neo-Platonist, and alternately condemned as degrading the Platonic philosophy "by the introduction of an irrational mysticism," (*Philosophies of Beauty*, Carritt) and praised as "the greatest individual thinker between Aristotle and Descartes" (*The Neo-Platonists*, Whittaker) accepted the monistic basis of life and thought, and developed the implications inherent in the transcendental totality of Plato. He saw all objective things as "copies of an original." Art also copies, he says (*Enneads*), but "the arts do not merely copy the visible world, but ascend to the principles on which nature is built up." The artist, by virtue of his imagination, transfers the creative beauty within himself to created objects which manifest "a lesser beauty." All recognised outer beauty is to Plotinus a shadow of an inexpressible inner beauty. The direction of the life-movement is from within outwards, from what we may term vertical inspiration to horizontal expression. "The soul," says Plotinus, "is beautiful in virtue of intelligence, and other things are beautiful so far as the soul gives them form—all things that are beautiful in actions and ways of life. And," he adds, "it is soul that gives even bodies the right to be

called beautiful." Edmund Spenser, the English poet, put this idea into his much-quoted lines,

> For of the soul the body form doth take,
> For soul is form and doth the body make.

We may paraphrase the æsthetical doctrine of Plotinus as follows :

> Plotinus regards beauty as the condition that arose in the tangible universe under the organisation of a Supreme Intelligence. This beauty shows itself as pure on the abstract side of the human consciousness, and as impure, or imperfect, on the physical side. It shows itself also in the world of nature. Thus it is at once a threefold manifestation from the primal consciousness and substance of the Universe ; at once transcendental in source, subjective in human perception, and objective in its media of expression.

Thus the monism of Plato passed into the trinitarianism of the neo-Platonist. Or we might say that a transcendental apex of conceivable, though not cognisable, beauty has extended itself to a base of beautiful objects through the two phases of the human consciousness, feeling and thinking.

Histories of philosophy show a blank of a thousand years in æsthetical speculation. Indeed the blank between philosopher and philosopher, between Plotinus in the third century and Bacon in the late sixteenth, is over thirteen centuries, with an incidental contribution by a theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). St. Thomas wrote : "For beauty there are

three requirements. First, a certain wholeness or perfection, for whatever is incomplete is, so far, ugly ; second, a due proportion or harmony ; and third, clarity, so that brightly coloured things are called beautiful." (*Summa Theologica.*)

There is no indication here of the source or inner nature of beauty, nothing but a recognition of certain appearances of objects. Most æstheticians would agree with the first, wholeness, with the proviso that incompleteness, in order to qualify the object for exclusion from things beautiful, should be in the original conception or expression. Enforced incompleteness through mutilation does not make an originally beautiful object ugly. The original wholeness so pervades the entire object that a remnant of it can suggest something of the whole effect. We do not know the exact disposition of the lost arms and hands of the Venus de Milo, but we do not therefore consign what we have to the category of the ugly. Many people besides æsthetical philosophers regard "brightly coloured things" as sometimes symptoms of æsthetical insensitiveness, or even vulgarity. The second of St. Thomas' requirements, proportion or harmony, is contradicted by his immediate successor in æsthetical history, Bacon, who, in his essay "Of Beauty," says, "There is no essential beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

This is the same thing as saying that beautiful things are beautiful by virtue of some departure from the normal. Here we have, on the one hand, an anticipation of the asymmetrical element in much of modern western art,

and, on the other hand, a justification for other departures from the normal in both classical and modern Indian art.

An interesting reflection may here be indulged in as a warning against a too stiff dealing with words in searching among the writings of other searchers for clues to the nature of beauty—or anything else. If it is a fact that real beauty is not expressible through things that are in exact proportion, then it would appear (Keats notwithstanding) that beauty which does not keep to the proportions that nature imposes on things is not truth. Hegel, indeed, getting close to the Indian idea of *maya* said that the means employed by art is *deception*. And if pleasure is, as certain æstheticians hold, the sign of beauty, then truth, which is frequently anything but pleasant, is not beauty. The poet's immortal epigram—" Beauty is truth, truth beauty "—would appear to be upside down both ways : beauty is false, truth is ugly.

There is no truth, however, in this logic-chopping. It is cited only as an indication, apposite to the study of the nature of beauty, of the difficulty of arriving at the reality of this or any other matter by a too strict literalism. The difficulty with all thinking is that the thinkers cannot completely rid themselves of preconceived or current or traditional notions. They do not approach problems with the maximum of developed intellectual faculty, but face them with a barricade of ghosts of their mental past—as though an athlete in front of a situation needing the exercise of his strength and agility interposed instead a barricade of his training apparatus. To get at the reality behind words we have to get at " some strangeness in

the proportion" of their meaning. There is as much difference between *right* and *rights* as there is between a *norm* and the *normal*, and between the Vedantic *ánanda* and what is ordinarily meant by *pleasure*. The first is reducible by disinterested thought to "constants" in nature; the second is a concession to local acceptances. Reality is not *in* either; it is approachable *through* them singly, but more effectively together. A girl-poet in America, Nathalia Crane, at the age of nine, uncovered for us the almost lost Way of Wisdom, and intellectual Tolerance, by saying of a spiritual Master that

> He won me by revealing
> The truth in all His lies.

Returning to our main topic, let us note that Bishop Berkeley (1685-1753) telescoped St. Thomas Aquinas and Socrates by asserting that "there is no beauty without proportion," and that "proportions are to be esteemed just and true only as they are relative to some certain use or end, their aptitude and subordination to which end is, at bottom, that which makes them please and charm." *(The New Alciphron.)*

The birth of modern science is sometimes fathered on Francis Bacon. But the scientific spirit and method did not take up the problems of æsthetics until a century after him. Naturally the approach of science to the subject was empirical and rational. Enquiry was focussed on the characteristics of the objects regarded as beautiful, and on the processes of human reaction to such objects.

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1740) gave a reminiscent glance at the wider possibilities of the study in the

attribution of cause and design to Deity. He also recognised the impossibility of saying that the reaction identified as beauty is unknown to other entities than humans. But, he says, in a clear enunciation of modern psychological science : "Our enquiry is confined to men." His findings fall into the categories of absolute and relative beauty. Absolute beauty is original, and "seems to be in a compound ratio of uniformity and variety ; so that where the uniformity of bodies is equal, the beauty is as the variety; and where the variety is equal, the beauty is as the uniformity." For example (the example is mine) the beauty of variety in uniformity appears when a number of similar objects are arranged in a design ; and the beauty of uniformity in variety when beds of different kinds of flowers are realised as not merely beds of flowers but as a garden. Relative or comparative beauty, according to Hutcheson, "is founded on a conformity or a kind of unity between the original and the copy." There is considerable pliability in these definitions ; but he takes us no further towards understanding what beauty consists in save as a balance between unity and variety. Yet this is, in fact, a very important contribution to a living experience of something that may be called beauty, as those will know, in one of its aspects, who have tried with some success to tidy up a disorderly room or hang a number of pictures.

Hutcheson's limitation of the study of beauty to object and subject may be called æsthetical dualism. Others of the same school were Hume, Burke, Reid, Herbert Spencer. Crocé in our time carries on the dualistic

tradition. Their contribution to the specific matter of the nature of beauty, with which we are now concerned, is small.

We have seen that the view of the nature of beauty held by Plotinus in the third century was an æsthetical trinitarianism. Fourteen centuries were to pass before that way of approaching the subject was again travelled by serious philosophers. Leibniz (1646-1716) moved towards it by visualising harmony and beauty as inherent in the universe, and thus giving it a transcendental source. The harmony of the universe was perceived with clarity by the intellect; the beauty was realised vaguely in feeling. Baumgarten (1714-1762), the originator of the term "æsthetic", followed Leibniz in postulating beauty as perfection, intellectually discerned, and perceived in objects by the senses. Kant (1724-1804) taught that the taste for things beautiful was the only free and disinterested taste, as distinct from taste for things pleasant or good, such tastes being influenced by irrelevant satisfactions. The taste for beauty was, according to Kant, subjective (or latent) in relation to individual experience; it was called forth by objects; and it was a "universal voice" transcending individual experience. Here we have the complete trinitarianism which, as we have seen, was anticipated by Plotinus; subjective (internal, latent), objective (external, expressed), and trancendental (inclusive of subjective and objective, therefore transcending either or both). Other philosophers touched by the trinitarian idea of beauty were Schelling, Schopenhauer and Hegel.

Turning to modern thought on the nature of beauty, we find in the Earl of Listowel's very useful book, *A Critical History of Modern Aesthetics* no less than eighty-one writers listed as having dealt with the subject during the past half century. Yet their total contribution adds little to that of their predecessors in the history of philosophy.

Professor E. F. Carritt of Oxford, in *The Theory of Beauty*, defines beauty as the expression of emotion, all such experience being beautiful; and, since there are many opinions on beauty and no science of beauty, it is obviously subjective: thus we are back at Socrates, though with a difference.

H. B. Marshall (*The Beautiful* and *Aesthetic Principles*) sees beauty as physiological pleasure, but a special pleasure, "relatively stable, or real, pleasure," obtained through eye and ear, as distinct from the transient and fatiguing pleasures of the lower senses. Beauty, according to him, has nothing to do with objects, or with an absolute source.

George Santayana takes beauty to be the pleasure derived from the three qualities of things; the materials of objects as they appeal to the senses, the arrangement of such materials as grasped by perception, and the expressiveness that such arranged materials convey through association.

The French philospher-poet, J. M. Gayau, denies that æsthetic enjoyment is free of any association, practical or ideal; and regards beauty as an experience in consciousness or action which arouses vitality in sensation, intelligence and volition, our awareness of this elevation

of life producing the pleasure associated with beauty. This experience, he says, may be gained in many ways besides artistic creation or appreciation.

The three-sided design in the minds of Santayana and Gayau might lead us to suppose that they were among the trinitarians. This would be a mistake. Not every philosopher who can count up to three is a trinitarian. Santayana in fact only counts up to two, (1) objective material, and (2) subjective reaction in its double phase of thinking and feeling. Gayau does not get beyond one, for his threefold reaction is only a triple subjective reaction of feeling, thinking and willing. The true trinitarians as indicated above, saw things objectively, subjectively and transcendentally. But Santayana (*The Sense of Beauty*) gives us what would appear to be a true test of beauty as pleasure. "The ideas," he says, "with which æsthetic pleasures are associated are not the ideas of their bodily causes. The pleasures we call physical, and regard as low, on the contrary, are those which call our attention to some part of our own body, and which make no object so conspicuous to us as the organ in which they arise." In other words, an experience of real beauty liberates, but lesser beauty binds, and anti-beauty enslaves.

Herbert Spencer, following Schiller and Kant, regarded beauty as consisting of pleasure derived from experience that had no relationship to the necessities of the body. This is known as the play-theory in æsthetics, that is, the free-play of the æsthetic sense without ulterior motive.

Ruskin distinguished *typical* beauty from *vital* beauty ; the first being derived from expressions of divine attributes, the second from happy fullness of life. Tolstoy shared Ruskin's theological and moral sympathies and narrowness.

F. T. Vischer followed Hegel in seeing beauty as the tangible expression of some idea out of the universal spiritual substance. If, to this recognition of the objective and transcendental phases of beauty, we add the implied subjective reaction in the percipient of beauty, we see him as one of the few modern æsthetical trinitarians.

Before we turn from west to east on the quest of beauty, let us take a brief look at modern individualistic thought in regard to beauty, using as a text *The Philosophy of Art* by Professor Curt John Ducasse, of Brown University, in the United States of America. According to the "blurb" of the book, it "makes a brilliant and devastating attack on a number of views of art and beauty which are widely accepted, and sets forth a radically individualistic æsthetic philosophy." The author in his preface lists "some characteristic theses of the philosophy of art" which have resulted from the application of a "thorough-going relativism" to the subject, *viz.* : "that art and beauty are things essentially distinct, no matter how closely they may tend to go together in fact ; that Beautiful and Ugly are terms predicating of objects only the fact that someone who contemplates them æsthetically obtains from them feelings that are pleasant or unpleasant ; that judgements of beauty are therefore wholly relative to the constitution of the individual observer,

and are 'valid' for others only so far as those others happen to be constituted like him. . ." The kernel of what the author calls "Philosophical Liberalism" is the dictum that "individuals as such are the only absolutes to be found."

Professor Ducasse defines art as the *process* of creating works of art, as distinct from the works themselves. Any art object that stimulates pleasure is to be called beautiful, whether it be a work of art or "foods, wines, climate, amusements, companions, etc." A work of art, therefore, is not necessarily beautiful, and a beautiful thing need not necessarily be a work of art. Hence the dictum quoted above that, even if art and beauty go closely together, they are essentially distinct. Hence further, to reduce this example of "thorough-going relativism" to what appears to be its inherent inconsistency, if our customary pleasure from food is broken by a badly cooked preparation, we must not fine or dismiss the cook, since the art of cookery and the pleasure derived from cooked things are "essentially distinct." Had the author asserted that art and beauty (that cookery and satisfaction), though separable by the analytical mind for purposes of purely intellectual study, were essentially related, though the term art (and cookery) should for clarity be limited to the process in the studio (or the kitchen), and the term beauty, for some other reason, might be applied to pleasure derived from other things than created (or cooked) ones, he would have stated something like the truth of the matter, and given us that sense of respect that the great philosophers give us, even when we

disagree with them, respect for real thinking as distinct from mere argumentation.

Few will disagree with Professor Ducasse's claim that judgements of beauty are relative. But when he makes them " wholly " relative, he has changed a relative, which exists by virtue of relationships with other relatives, into an absolute—if the term absolute may be used to indicate something completely independent of anything else, which of course is impossible either in existence or imagination. This transformation of relative into absolute is easy for a writer who can, as already quoted, say that " individuals as such are the only absolutes to be found," and call this " Philosophical Liberalism " instead of " Philosophical Anarchism." But if one of those " individuals as such " spent a day in acting out the implications of a claim to be " wholly relative " or an " absolute," he would, from his relationships with the cook, the waterman, the washer-man, and other electronic contributors to the valency (which might be translated vulgarly, self-importance) of the thorough-going individualistic proton, discover that the effort to act as an *absolute relative* was not a success. He might also make the interesting discovery that the relationships between relatives, that enabled them to exist as such, did not have their origin or end within the boundaries of the " wholly relative " or the " individual absolute," but inhered in circumstances that surrounded and permeated the relatives, circumstances that to the relatives constituted an absolute, and made the term relative intelligible. In other words, in compensation for the loss of pride in discovering that

one cannot be an *absolute relative*, one may gain the higher pride of realising that one is, whether one enjoys it or not, a *relative absolute*. The intuition of this enlargement is the cause of religious aspiration and of art creation. It is also the source of the transcendentalism of the trinitarian philosophers. The artists respond to it, and express their response in utterances that are likely ultimately to displace both the dull and conforming philosophisings and the "brilliant and devastating" mental stunts of studio æstheticians as reports of reality regarding beauty and art. Detailed references to the poets on beauty would, however, overload the present study. A couple must suffice as an indication. Robert Bridges in "The Testament of Beauty" makes beauty the highest of the "occult influences" that

> wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man,

which is something more profound than common pleasure even of the mind or the feelings. AE in a poem entitled "Transience" says:

> The suns that rise, the suns that set,
> Time's tidal waves of blue and gold
> That roll from far ethereal seas,
> Hill-land and forest, starlit pool,
> Are images we soon forget,
> And swiftest when most beautiful.
> For when most beautiful we feel
> That there is something they reveal,
> Some lordlier being of their kind;
> And beauty only meaneth this,
> And to the symbol we are blind.

And there are Masefield's sonnets on Beauty, and Spenser's Hymns, and many others.

Turning to the Orient for further light on the nature of beauty, we observe an interesting parallel in the general thought of the two best-known philosophers of ancient China, Lao-tse (604-514 B.C.) and Confucius (551-478 B.C.), and the two best-known philosophers of ancient Greece, Socrates (469-399 B.C.) and Plato (429-347 B.C.).

The Chinese sages preceded the Grecian by a century, and the senior of each pair preceded the junior by about half a century. All of them were monists in thought, that is, they traced all things back to an origin ; and the distinction between subjective monism which saw beauty as a mental evaluation according to utility, as taught by Socrates, and transcendental monism, which traced everything back to a superhuman origin, as taught by Plato, is paralleled in the teaching of Lao-tse and Confucius.

Plato traced beauty back to super-mundane archetypes, even as the Hebrews, religious monists, saw the human form as the materialisation of the Adam Kadmon, or Divine Man in the Heavens. Lao-tse traced everything, beauty included, back to *Tao*, the Cosmic Mind, the *Buddhi* of Indian philosophy. Lao-tse gives us no specific thought on the nature of beauty. He ignored the arts ; but his followers later utilised them as means to contemplation and illumination : and from the unity and simplicity which characterise Taoist painting we may infer that these characteristics, together with the contemplative and illuminative potency of works of art, would be esteemed as marks of beauty by the Taoist mind.

Confucius, on the other hand, from personal experience of the relaxation and enjoyment that he found in the practice of the literary, musical and ceremonial arts, recommended them for their social usefulness. An ancient book that Confucius translated, the *Li Ki*, told of the pleasure that the sages found in music, and of the discovery by ancient kings that music could purify the desires of the people, for which reason they included music as a subject in education. But Confucius added the shrewd proviso that a man who did not possess the human virtues had nothing to do with music. A whole psychology of the use of the arts in education is latent in this association of virtue and art.

In the pleasure, contemplation, illumination, and good associated with the arts in the thought of ancient China (for the two sages mentioned were editors and interpreters of a long and broad tradition) we have a parallel of the Indian idea. The point that is apposite to our present enquiry as to the nature of beauty is that the association of beauty with pleasure, that is the most prominent identifying mark in the history of philosophy, is fundamental to Indian thought.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever," Keats sang, voicing, with necessary poetical emphasis, the fact that an object which embodies the quality recognised as beauty carries with it a lasting pleasure. But the phrase, though it satisfies normal human experience, is a champion piece of question-begging, for it tells us exactly nothing as to what the beauty that elicits lasting joy really is.

The Vedantic conception of *ánanda* as the first condition of existence (the *ánanda-maya kosha* being the first sheath of cosmic manifestation), and as the sign of beauty, turns Keats' phrase the other way round (a joy forever is a thing of beauty) ; and while it leaves us with no conception as to what beauty is except that it has the capacity to awaken joy in the beholder, it gives us a key that seems at first sight to be too large for its lock, or capable of opening too many locks ; for if the impartation of *ánanda* by anything brings it within the category of beauty, then there are more things in heaven and earth (Horatio) than would seem to be capable of being dreamt of in a sensible philosophy of beauty, not only the things included in Professor Ducasse's catalogue, which are called "eats and beverages" in his country, but political meetings, bull-fights, Balinese funerals, crooners, wars, and other things that obviously give pleasure to millions, but are not thought of as eligible for admission to museums as specimens of art and beauty.

But the association of beauty and joy is not so easily broken as this criticism of a too general expression of them might seem to indicate. We can easily pass from superficial, therefore harmless, error to fundamental, therefore harmful, falsehood, by asking too much of any of the terms that humanity has created, out of its capacity to make and repeat signs and sounds, in order to record and communicate its responses to experience. The desire for definition may go the length of reducing thought on a particular topic to a mere "specimen" of thought by robbing it of the associations beyond definition that are its real life.

For these reasons and others it is not possible to dismiss Keats' identification of joy with beauty, or the Vedantic identification of beauty with joy, as untenable because one or the other appears to grant too much, and both beg the question. Question-begging, indeed, seems to be the Great Game of the Universe ; everything that is worth while is worth while just to the extent that it remains inexplicable after honest thought has done its best to understand it. This does not mean, of course, that everything that is befogged or mushy is therefore worth while. Common experience tells us the contrary. What it means is that there are degrees and directions involved in every conscious transaction, and that it is from these, rather than from specific objects or events, that we gather the values of things. In other words, there are things of beauty, and things of more- or less-beauty ; and there is joy, and joy. And when we seek to realise the gradations and movements that, in their permutations and combinations, evoke variations of pleasurable response in us, we have for our helping the philosophy of India that not only recognises bliss as the essence of beauty, but gives us the tests of true bliss that enable us to differentiate between spurious and authentic beauty.

To get an idea of Indian thought on the nature of beauty, we have to understand the significance and inter-relationships of the Sanskrit terms *ánanda* and *rasa*. In my interpretation of these I have to rely on thirty years' study of English translations of the Upanishads and other scriptures, at first in solitariness, but afterwards in the company of Sanskrit scholars who gave the necessary

correction and ratification to my own intuitive attempts at understanding what was behind the translations.

According to the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *ánanda* is declared to be the nature of the Universal Being (Bliss is Brahman). In the *Katha Upanishad*, *ánanda* is said to be the first emanation or sheath of the Universal Being as it sets up a movement within itself towards definition within boundaries. But *ánanda* in either of these senses must not be regarded as something extraneous to human life in its nature, or remote from our day as a process ante-dating astronomical and geological ages. Human life is included in the Universal Life, not as a foreign substance but as an integral element. The process of definition continues, and every human entity participates in it by virtue of sharing in the Universal Life.

We must avoid also the notion that *ánanda* is distinct from the other phases of the Cosmic emanation. Since they all (intuition, thought, vitality, substance) originate in the Universal Being, and pass through the phase of *ánanda*, they carry the fundamental bliss of creation with them and express it according to their capacity. When the body is organically healthy we experience the *ánanda* of substance; when we are functionally healthy we experience the *ánanda* of energy; when we are mentally healthy we experience the *ánanda* of the mind; and when we are wholly well we experience the *ánanda* of the soul. Bliss is the sign of health of any kind. This is the inclusive hedonism of Indian thought.

Again, we must avoid the notion that *ánanda* is any kind of pleasure, and can be got in any kind of way. We

have noted Santayana's idea that low pleasure binds one to its organ of satisfaction, while high pleasure liberates the inner being from its instruments. This is a close approach in western thought to the Upanishadic idea that no action or experience of any kind, including the æsthetical experience that gives the reaction of beauty, ends with the action, or is for the sake of its organ or instrument: all action is for "the sake of the Self;" that is, it should, in some manner, measure or degree, lead away from the immediate action and its paraphernalia towards the awakening of the Higher Self of the percipient, and towards the transformation of the outer life into the finer quality of the inner life. When the rapprochement between the outer and nominally separate individual consciousness and its own totality reaches a stage of intimacy, *ánanda* is experienced.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* distinguishes three degrees of *ánanda* as experienced through beautiful things: *priya*, which arises out of *simple experience* of the beautiful, such as comes to the unsophisticated; *moda*, which comes to those capable of *conscious enjoyment* (the collaboration of delight and reason which Dr. Coomaraswamy takes to be the characteristic of æsthetic experience according to Indian thought); and *pramoda*, the exalted bliss which is reached through *personal participation* in the expression of beauty. The common constituent of these three grades of *ánanda*, according to the Upanishad, is the *átman* or soul; the eternal basis is Brahman, the Universal Soul.

Other degrees of *ánanda* are recognised elsewhere in Indian philosophy; but the pursuit of philosophical

analysis is beyond the purpose of this study, which is the reaching through sufficient consideration of the thought of others as clear an idea as possible of the nature of beauty.

When Brahman moves through *ánanda* by the stages of simple experience and conscious enjoyment to active creation of beauty, the movement is from freedom into limitations. Discipline is needed to lift the individual from the level of simple *response* to that of conscious *appreciation* ; but the *creation* of beauty calls for consecration and purification, as recognised and prescribed by the wise of old in India ; and for his submission to the laws governing the creation of beautiful things the creator receives the reward of a deeper insight and a superior ecstasy.

This conception of *ánanda* comes to us from the general philosophy of India. The æsthetical philosophers give us the term *rasa* to express enjoyment aroused through sympathetic disinterested contemplation of God, nature, humanity, or any expression of human capacity. This is the *empathy* of modern western æsthetics. But the æsthetical libertinism that might appear to be condoned in this description of *rasa* is neutralised by the recognition that *rasa*, like *ánanda*, is an expression of the Universal Life, though modified by the human agent, and that it owes its origin and allegiance to that Universal Life and not to any of its details. " He is *rasa*," says the *Taittiriya Upanishad* ; " finding Him, the soul finds fullness of bliss." That is, *rasa* leads to *ánanda*, even as *ánanda* inspires the *pramoda* that creates the stimulating

agents of *rasa*. But the *rasa* that is experienced through art-activity is, in Indian thought, at a lower level than the *ánanda* experienced through saintliness. When the Hebrew Psalmist exclaimed, "Oh! worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," he spoke as a good Vedantist. *Ananda* is reachable by liberation from objects; *rasa* can only be experienced *through* objects.

The æsthetical experience called *rasa*, from which the quality identified as beauty is carried over to *rasa*-rousing objects, is not a matter of emotional experience only: it carries with it an intellectual awareness that enables the Indian listener to music to rejoice in the "science" of the singer and be entirely unconscious of the quality of the voice. "While the formal beauty," as Dr. Coomaraswamy says (*The Transformation of Nature in Art*) is the essential in Indian art, "loveliness and convenience are, not indeed fortuitous, but in the proper sense of the word, accidents of art"—that is, essential but secondary elements.

Such are some of the ideas of the nature of beauty that the mind of man has evolved in both hemispheres. Our response to any phase of it will probably be decided by temperament modified by up-bringing. The æsthetical experience being derivable through objects existing in a relative universe, beauty or ideas of beauty cannot be absolute: neither can they, because of their universal background, be merely relative, and certainly not absolutely relative.

CHAPTER XI

# THE EXPRESSION OF BEAUTY

It is generally held by æstheticians, with some exception, that the characteristic though not exclusive mode of expressing beauty is found in the arts; that man evolved his arts in order to objectify his inner response to a quality or qualities in things that came to be identified under the term beautiful.

The question is (not for the first time), What is Art? Tolstoy essayed to answer the question in a well-known book bearing the question itself as its title. But he limited art to the communication of feeling, and he limited feeling to a benign humanitarianism, and he limited humanitarianism to its interpretation by religion, and he limited religion to a single creed, and he limited the creed to a single exposition of it, and he left us little the wiser.

The baldest definition of art (and we give the term a plural connotation, not painting only, but all the arts and art-crafts) is "the *process* of producing something," a definition that admits no relationship between beauty and art. Professor C. J. Ducasse of Brown University, U. S. A., leads up to this definition as follows *(The Philosophy of Art)*:

By far the most common opinion concerning the nature of art is that it is the human activity which aims at the creation of

beautiful things. This definition at first seems plausible because most of us find some degree of beauty in the vast majority of the works of art of which we think spontaneously ; for instance, the contents of museums and art galleries. But reflection quickly shows, I think, that art cannot possibly be defined in terms of beauty. For, particularly in these 'modern' days, we meet with many objects which are undeniably works of art, but which are none the less very ugly . . . certain things which, brought into existence through the deliberate intention to create something beautiful, are not works of art . . . the figures created by the turning of a kaleidoscope ; the spectrum created by passing sunlight through a prism ; the form and colour created by pouring a little crude oil on water. . . Art implies, among other things, the critical control of a process of objectification, and this is absent in any true sense from the processes creative of beauty just mentioned . . . to describe anything as a work of art is merely to say something as to the sort of process through which it came into being.

Professor Ducasse himself puts a thatch of explanation over the ultimate baldness of definition by telling us, in the above quotation, that "art implies, among other things, the critical control of a process of objectification." Both the "critical control" and the "process of objectification" also imply certain things that make definition not quite so simple as it at first sounds.

"Critical control" implies an intellectual suzerainty over the ways and means employed in a "process of objectification." If an alleged artist, under an impulse of objectification in colour, proceeded to carry out his colour-impulse on an Indian *vina* or an Irish harp, he would get no further than being regarded as a harmless victim of the moon. Yet, curiously enough, people do talk in the West of the "colour" of a piece of music, meaning thereby a certain heightening of effect beyond that of ordinary sound, a heightening comparable to the intensified effect

that colour gives to a black-and-white outline ; and the mediæval painters of North India, recognising this similarity of inner effect from the arts of music and painting, created the series of pictures that are supposed to arouse the same subjective reaction as their appropriate *ragas* (scales).

Perhaps the most thorough " critical control " of the " process of objectification " in the history of art is that contained in the *Silpa sastras* (craft rules) of India, with their strict measurements and attitudes and attributes for deific figures. Sukracharya, a mediæval writer on social organisation and government, eliminated individual taste in the matter of image-making and denied beauty in anything not strictly in accordance with the *sastramana* or canons of prescribed proportion.

The " process of objectification " implies a movement outwards from a state of consciousness which is compounded of vision, intuition, imagination, idea or impulse, or all together, or some combination of them, a state which is subjective to the individual but which, in its movement towards objectification in some form of art, is modified by racial, temperamental, traditional and local circumstances and expressional technique. When the " process of objectification," of art-creation, fulfils itself in some outer expression of inner intimation, there is brought into existence an entity that is not merely a dead or dumb object, but that has, for those who can work out the algebraical problems of art-symbolism, meanings that speak with the voice and in the vernacular of humanity, and with a faintly heard obligato by the trumpets of the

seraphim. Both the "critical control" and the fulfilment of the "process of objectification" are put into other words by Dr. Coomaraswamy, in his supremely valuable book, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, when he cites as one of the two "most significant elements" in Asian æsthetics the law "that the work of art itself, which serves as the stimulus for all inhibitions of vision, can only come into being as a thing ordered to specific ends" ("critical control"). "Heaven and earth," he adds, "are united in the analogy of art, which is an ordering of sensation to intelligibility, and tends towards an ultimate perfection in which the seer perceives all things imaged in himself."

Now this "process of objectification" under "critical control" includes three phases: (1) the impulse to objectification whose warmth is carried through the whole process; (2) the intellectual element that controls and suffuses the process with its light; (3) the process itself, that is, the technique of the particular kind of objectification, the chosen art-form and its appropriate implements. Moreover, the feeling, thinking and doing elements in creative art may themselves become the material of the artist who, according to his temperament, may not only express his own emotion but make a particular emotion the theme of his work of art; or may take as his theme a particular idea or a succession of ideas. And as creative artists are positive and centrifugal persons, they have a knack of calling others to their banner, hunting in packs, forming gangs, and making eras in art-history.

For this reason we find, for example, specially marked in the art of English poetry the era of romance, around the beginning and early years of the nineteenth century, that evolved such names as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, each in some degree and manner expressing emotional adventure ; and we find also what has been called the classical era of the eighteenth century, giving us such names as Dryden and Pope, who approached the life of the city through the mind.

Such a distinction, however, does not mean a complete severance of feeling and thinking. It means only a predominance of one or the other ; and the predominance is never permanent. However the emotional or intellectual tendency may move, it reaches an extreme, and the temporarily depressed opposite element asserts itself and ultimately reaches its own predominance. English poetry shows a series of these movements in response to a simple psychological necessity of relief from the fatigue of sameness. Poetry got tired of feeling, and took to thinking for a change : it got tired of thinking and took to feeling. In the years following the war of 1914-1918, when the tension of life, the shattering of unsubstantial illusions, and the "breaking of the bonds" of sensual restraint, made clear thought or sane feeling a difficulty to many, poetry took to babbling technically, and at the same time jettisoned technique. It cried : "Up with mechanism as theme for poetry, and down with the mechanics of poetry !" That is the kind of thing that people will do when the "critical control" of expression is renounced, and, with the eye and ear directed

immediately to objects, a "*process* of objectification" becomes superfluous.

The terms "classical" and "romantic" deserve special consideration as alternating constants in the history of the expression of beauty. The term "classical" was originally applied to the most eminent writers of ancient Greece and Rome, writers of the highest "class," whose works paralleled the nobility and chastity of the immortal sculptures. "Romance" originally had nothing to do with romanticism in the semi-modern sense of the term as used in relation to the poetry of the early nineteenth century, or in the completely modern usage that has degraded the crusades of the imagination and higher feelings to mere sentimental or sensual adventuring. In the study of language, Romance is still a favourite term for the South European languages that arose out of local transformations of the Roman language, the language of ancient Latium, the region around Rome. With the passing of time the term "classical" was given a mental connotation, and the term "romantic" an emotional one.

Perhaps the largest alternation from the classical manner to the romantic mood is that known as the Renaissance, in the middle of the fifteenth century in Europe, when the Church's "critical control" of the processes of objectification, especially sculpture and painting that had produced immortal masterpieces with which we are all more or less acquainted either directly or through photographs or reproductions, had to be relaxed under the æsthetical experience of the discovery of "the glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome" (Poe's

phrase). Historically, the products of the process of classical objectification have come to us from "captive Greece" and her "rude conqueror" Rome. Their disclosure of beauty in sculpture (we think of the Apollo Belvedere and the Mercury Resting, among others) comes through the idealisation of human form and expression until they have reached a perfection fit to simulate divinity. In literature (we think of Homer and Euripides and others) the idealisation was of human qualities and powers. Sometimes the achievement was manifold; in one case, that of Gitiades of Sparta, architecture, sculpture, bronze-work, and poetry.

Yet, for all the classical quality of the Greek and Roman expression of beauty, it was in fact romantic in the sense in which we have come to think of Romance, that is, as individual adventure in creation. Its critical control was natural (based on nature), not canonical. A Zeus and a Nataraja (Shiva as the Deity of Dance) side by side exemplify this difference. Both are anthropomorphic, inasmuch as they both use the human form for the visual representation of divinity. But whereas the Grecian genius made its Gods frankly in the image and likeness of man, as a perfected, single-headed, two-armed biped, the Hindu genius had more respect for deity than to condemn it to a form so restricted. True, it kept to the bipedal stage of locomotion; but it made extension of human equipment in extra heads and arms in visual arts; and in the literary arts, where imagination can move freely beyond the "critical control" of form-in-substance, the Hindu genius found no difficulty in furnishing the

fundamental human form with "a thousand hands, a thousand eyes, a thousand names."

Neither anatomy, physiology, psychology nor arithmetic was involved in these Hindu figures. They are just the algebra of iconography, in which the *x*, *y* or *z* of things seen and heard stands for whatever the collaborating intuition, emotion and cognition of humanity can attribute to them in the attempt to express in form that which, containing all forms, is formless.

The expression of beauty in the canonical art of India is two-fold ; first, the beauty of content, that is, a calling up of religious and philosophical associations that give to the Hindu mind the æsthetical experience with which beauty is associated ; second, the beauty of form, which is also a product of association in which a modification of the measurements and limbs of the human figure has been accepted for many centuries. If sculptures and paintings fulfil these requirements, superficial beauty is not regarded as important.

Here arises the question of the *grotesque* in art and its role in the expression of beauty. There are very intelligent artists in the West who shrink from what they regard as the "monstrosity" of much of Indian art. They get a sick feeling when they see a many-armed Durga : a four-headed Brahma gives them an ache in their own single head. Their reactions to that which is unusual to them cannot, however, be given any considerable weight in the assessment of artistic values ; because it is quite certain that if they had been born and reared on a planet where four arms a-side was the fashion, and were dropped

on to the earth, they would get an acute sense of mutilation and deprivation when they found themselves among a people who obviously had had their other six arms lopped off by some cruel tyrant, and were compelled to live out a miserable existence on only one arm a-side.

The grotesque, in other words, is merely the unusual. And because we grow accustomed to certain ways of expressing beauty in art, we resent other ways to which we are not accustomed. A musical western lady described Indian singing as "caterwauling": an Indian student called the sound produced by playing on the piano "a hell of a noise." Even I, who have no discomfort, but rather a special pleasure, in living with many-armed images, and envy those with four or more heads the chance of being able to do efficiently and leisurely the thinking that I have to try and squeeze through my niggardly supply of only one, felt uncomfortable at certain grotesque phases of Balinese art and life, though I realised that they were not grotesque to the Balinese, who were accustomed to them. This is the psychological source of cults in the arts, of which there have been more in the last half century in Europe than in centuries of previous art-history.

The term grotesque has been given, in art, to ornamental extravagance which uses a fauna and flora not described in natural history text-books, that is, non-existent. In this sense, the term unwittingly covers every character in drama and fiction ; every event in history ; even every biography, and particularly recent English biography which has taken its place among *belles-lettres* by virtue of its

having ceased to pretend that it was a record of fact and having become frankly super-factual, that is, grotesque. No normal man or woman ever behaved as the men and women of Shakespeare and Shaw do. The so-called realistic drama merely reduces its grotesquery an inch or two by mimicking the actions and accents and dress of the man in the street and the woman on the streets. But the plot of the drama is a grotesque fabrication of one brain ; and its stage-presentation is grotesque, for if an actor made a "false" entrance or exit, or spoiled the "picture" as seen from the auditorium by covering a speaking character, he would hear from the rehearser that it was drama he was playing, not life.

Music is as unnatural, therefore grotesque, as any other art. Its successions of sounds and its rhythms are artificial. To these are added in India the grimaces and gestures of singers and the twistings and turnings of drummers that are among the most grotesque practices in world music. Yet, because what is customary is not grotesque to any but the unaccustomed observer, all India finds joy in *bhajanas* (religious sing-songs), as I do myself. The operas of Richard Wagner are perhaps the greatest elaboration of the grotesque in music. Yet listeners have become so rapt in the performance of one of his music-dramas that an irrelevant sound would set them nearly crazy with irritation : the drama, intensified by musical emotion, had taken a greater hold on them than the ordinary inartistic things of life could do ; and had done so because ordinary life is not man's real life, and because in the arts he hears the call of his own spirit and of the

Spirit of Life to an intenser, larger, loftier experience than ordinary life can give.

I have spoken as if the grotesque were opposed to the natural. What has just now been stated, however, indicates that the grotesque is to man the truly natural. There is at the centre of his nature a sensitive and expansive core that is forever listening for the call of the "one increasing purpose" in his own life and in the life of his environment and of the universe. He seeks enlargement and intensification of experience, and expansion of consciousness. If he be denied the true satisfaction of this natural desire which participation in the "process of objectification" and appreciation of its objective results in works of art provide by virtue of their elevation above the usual, that is, by what we are now thinking of as their grotesqueness, he will seek satisfaction in other grotesque ways, but ways which give an exaggerated importance to the organs of satisfaction, and not only enslave consciousness to its instruments, which is the deepest of human humiliations, but ultimately, by overuse, destroy the physical means to such satisfaction as had been experienced.

I cannot here develop the whole significance of the grotesque nature of art. One further reference to this aspect of the expression of beauty in the arts must suffice, a reference to the increasingly popular art of the classical Indian dance. From the point of view of the few ordinary movements in walking, both regular and erratic, dancing is obviously beyond the customary, and is therefore grotesque. But human history suggests that dancing is perhaps the oldest of the arts, and that it sets its feet on a

fundamental condition of life, that is, movement, but movement under "critical control" which turns mere motion into rhythmical expression.

Dance is common to both the primitive and sophisticated phases of existence in past history and today. David danced before the Lord, and Salome before Herod; and a figure made in metal five thousand years ago and recently exhumed at Mohenjodaro is taken by scholars to be that of an ancestress of the temple dancers of India. In Java and Bali, dance is the almost sole expressional art of forty millions of people, with its accompaniment of gong-music.

Rhythm is of course not confined to the dance: it is one of the fundamentals of music. It is also, strange though it may appear, one of the elements of the immobile arts: a piece of sculpture is only realisable through a series of movements of the eye from point to point, movements that give a subjective reaction to "movements" in the sculpture; and the æsthetical pleasure derived from sculpture, in addition to the pleasure of religious or human association in the figure, arises out of the measure of response which the figure makes to the desire for rhythm. A "stiff" statue does not please. The first of the six canons of Chinese painting, propounded in the sixth century A.D. by Hsieh Ho, is rhythmic vitality.

Now rhythm, being a fundamental ingredient in the expression of beauty, exerts a strong influence on the human sensorium. Few can keep their feet or hands quiet while music with a strongly marked rhythm is being played. Rhythm can induce trance, or excite activity; it can arouse

low desire, or awaken spiritual ecstasy. Western dancing draws attention to its organ of satisfaction, the body ; it has always been sensuous, and in some of its recent phases has become sensual. Japanese dance *(Noh)* is a blend of physical and æsthetical elements ; its themes are usually ghostly, and its presentation is exquisite. Javanese and Balinese classical dances are also exquisite, and their themes, from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, dissociate them from the present and the body. But a recent development in Java of individual dancing without any story, with an accompaniment of singing "about love," indicates extraneous and threatening influences.

The Indian classical dance, *Bharata Natya*, performed with reverence and understanding, as Srimati Rukmini Devi does, is a potent means of lifting the observer's consciousness out of bodily conditions into a state of consciousness in which one becomes acutely aware of the call of the Greater Life as revealed by the rhythmical vitality of the consecrated and disciplined human form, and aware of a beauty unsullied by clay. AE knew something of this experience in imagination, and sang of it in a poem called "Wood Ways." After a period of exile he had found again the joy of communion with the Great Life, and says :

> Upon its burnished uplands what shining dancers,
> With what unfallen beauty, what wild innocence,
> Make visible the laughter of their King !
> By what fleet witchery of limb the inaudible
> Becomes music to the eye, joy in the heart !
> What secret lies behind the lovely light ?
> What lovelier darkness, from which spirit-clear
> Voices call to me, "O come home, come home !"

A last word on this phase of our topic. When what is called art is not in any degree grotesque, beyond the irreducible minimum of grotesquery that it cannot avoid, inasmuch as it is not made of flesh or timber or waves or sunlight, but of plaster or marble or canvas and colour; that is, when a work of so-called art is a representation of actuality, it is not truly a work of art, because it is not the result of a "process of objectification" which moves from invisibility into visibility, but is a mere reflection of the already visible—in short, a copy; a static affair that did not come out of rhythmical necessity. "Art is not," says Laurence Binyon *(The Flight of the Dragon)*, "an adjunct to existence, a reduplication of the actual; it is a hint and a promise of that perfect rhythm, of the ideal life."

The expression of beauty in *music* is primarily related to sound and rhythm, and secondarily to literary content. Its appeal is *from* feeling *to* feeling through some relationship, not yet fully understood, between sound-sequences and feeling-states. Western music lays special stress on the quality of the sound, instrumental and vocal. No amount of meaning or feeling will excuse a harsh-voiced singer, or an instrument out of tune. When feeling, meaning and tone are together at their highest, as in oratorio and grand opera, we have the supreme vocal art.

Because music consists of sound and rhythm, which are basic and universal human media of expression, there has arisen the saying that "music is a universal language." This is somewhat more than the fact. The capacity for music is universal. Music is, if you like, a universal speech; but it has, like its verbal parallel, evolved a

number of languages, even of dialects, with marked variations of usage and values.

In Indian music, for example, a raucous or nasal voice is not held as a fault in a singer, though the latter is, as pointed out by Fox-Strangways (chapter on music in *The Legacy of India*), condemned in Sanskrit treatises on music. So accustomed, indeed, has the ear of India become to the somewhat heavy middle voice to which high and low voices have to adjust themselves because of the lack of harmonic provision for differences of pitch, that a large audience of Indians laughed heartily and derisively when a European began to sing a song in what was in western estimation a pleasing tenor voice. Quality of tone in the western sense does not enter as such into the expression of beauty through Indian music. There is a certain excellence of phrasing in the embellishments of Indian vocal music from which Indian hearers derive the pleasure with which beauty is associated. Such embellishments were used in western vocal music up to the nineteenth century. Snatches hummed from Handel's *Messiah* have been taken by Indians to be unfamiliar Indian songs. But western musicians now regard such elaborations as mere sound-gymnastics, and, from their training in respect for the integrity of a phrase, they detect spots on the sun of beauty when an Indian singer breaks a phrase in order to catch a breath or to cough.

In the arrangement of sounds to produce music in India, the only suggestion of harmony is in the responsive notes sounded on stringed instruments, equivalent to the drone bass of the bagpipes. Indian vocal music is

entirely melodic. But in its attention to "musical line" an elaboration of modes, or scales *(raga)*, has been reached that makes the usual three scales of western music (major, minor and chromatic) sound juvenile.

In the early days of the Christian era the music of the Church, a simple melody known as "plain-song," was very much akin to the *Samaveda* chant. Both styles have come down to us in the liturgies of the Catholic Church and the Hindu Temple. But the general music of both regions moved away from the same primitive stage. The discovery and elaboration of harmony, from the fourteenth century onwards, bifurcated musical history. India went on in the "single file" of melody ; Europe marched four (sometimes more) abreast. This event, if there is any reality behind Plato's statement that a change in the music of a country will cause a change in its political structure, may have more to do with the condition of Europe today than might at first sight appear reasonable, and may not be without illumination on the recent history of Japan, which coincides with her adoption of western music.

Both methods in music (the melodic and the harmonious) have, of course, their own special expression of beauty. Harmony has an unlimited range of impressive effects, from the suggestion of the descent of the Holy Grail to the imitation of a football match. Multiplicity of instruments and voices, and tone quantity, are not, however, the only agents of impressive effect. The harpers of ancient Ireland could, according to legend, rouse men to warfare, or deflect them from it, or put them to sleep,

with a melody. One is inclined to accept the tradition after hearing the " Londonderry Air " which fills one with spiritual nostalgia when played without the insipid love-song that was put to it as a concession or a pander to the erotic sentimentality of modern time. Students of English poetry will remember " Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music," by Dryden. At a *Noh*-drama in Tokyo, an American musician, who had participated in all sorts of orchestral effects, got an æsthetical shock from a single stroke on a drum along with a short phrase on a flute. The Goddess of Music is as much, perhaps more, on the side of the single individual as of the " big battalions." I saw Paderewski turn a three-ring circus and prize-fight stadium in New York into a temple of spiritual beauty with just his two hands and a " grand " pianoforte, and behind them the soul of a consecrated artist whose life-work was the evocation of beauty through music.

The concentration of Indian music on melody and rhythm in a condition of free movement which the piled-up vertical nature of harmony does not give, has allowed it to develop " graces " that can only sparingly be used in western music ; and to develop time-measures *(tala)* that are inconceivable to the western musician. When Tchaikowsky put a five-beat passage into a symphony half a century ago, he was regarded as a daring innovator. But the American musician who got the shock in Tokyo, got an illumination as to musical time in Madras, when Abdul Karim, at a private performance, beat out for him at my request the *tala* of a piece that worried the visitor with what he regarded as its lack of

any "time" that he could get a hold on. The Indian singer counted out a bar of fourteen beats in a succession of positive and negative pulsations—1 (blank); 1, 2 (blank); 1, 2, 3 (blank); 1, 2, 3, 4 (blank). The American musician declared that he had entered a world of rhythm of whose existence he had never had the faintest notion.

No one can prophesy what the effect will be on India's musical consciousness from the aerial bombardment of western music to which she is being more and more subjected. Efforts are being made to introduce harmony into Indian music with a minimum of disturbance to its character. It may be that a few highly specialised Indian musicians will concede the precision of rhythm and accuracy of note that harmony demands, and thus lose the special beauty of extemporisation. And even such Indian musicians as perform western music, save those that have had long training abroad, miss the *phrasing* that is one of the essentials of beauty in western music, and give it a *staccatto* touchwhichcomes out of the one-syllable-one-*swaram* method of much of Indian music.

In the development of instrumental means for the expression of beauty in music, India has not been behind other nations, and has given the cross-blown flute and the violin-bow to world music. In return she has taken to herself an instrument that first makes a musical European visitor laugh at its incongruity in the sphere of music, and then frown and resort to unmusical denunciation on the realisation of the destruction that is being wrought on the Indian ear and voice by the baby harmonium.

The content or "message" of music in India is a much more important element in the experience of beauty through music than it is elsewhere. But the content is devotional, not intellectual, save in the sense in which a reference to the drum in one hand of Nataraja and the flame in the other may have a philosophico-scientific connotation for the instructed mind that sees in the one a reference to the fundamental "rhythmical vitality" of the universe which we call wave-lengths now, and in the other a hint of the universally diffused fire which today we call radio-activity.

The sense of beauty received in witnessing a dance arises primarily from the rhythmical movement of the body and secondarily from the mental idea that is intended to be conveyed by the movement. In the ancient Greek theatre the chorus told of things taking place off the stage in a dance called *orchesis* : the place where they danced was known as the orchestra, a term now applied to the place where a group of instrumentalists play and also to the group itself. The classical Indian dance, *Bharata Natya*, has much the same function to fulfil : it tells us, in its representation of moods and ideas and in its depiction of stories of deific and heroic beings, of the intangibilities of the inner life that are forever seeking media through which they may fulfil themselves in the "process of objectification." Its technique is elaborate and exacting, and calls for rigorous disciplining of the entire nature of the dancer. Its movements are under strict "critical control," though with a margin for individual variation ; that is, mere movement is subjected to rhythmical repetition, and

to design in position in relation to the earth. From these conjoint elements in the dance a rich beauty is received. Elsewhere dance is used for the conveyance of simple feelings : it reaches a point of frenzy in the Negro dances of America. A fine æsthetical type of dance has recently been developed in the west through the genius of Pavlova, Maud Allen, Isidora Duncan and others. Large-scale dancing under the name Eurhythmics has been developed by Dalcroze in Geneva. Physicians now prescribe dancing for various pathological conditions : Indian dancing had originally a biological intention. This has nothing to do with beauty. But, just as one cannot touch offal without being defiled, neither can one come under the influence of beauty through the dance or otherwise without being to some degree purified ; and the present renaissance of dancing in India can become a nation-wide influence towards individual and social refinement if it will only keep away from the exploitation of sensuality that marks certain phases of dancing elsewhere.

The expression of beauty in Mussulman architecture and painting is, like its Persian prototype, through refined form and texture, and exquisite delicacy of craftsmanship.

A brief reference to China and Japan must complete this comparative sketch of certain aspects of the occidental and oriental expression of beauty.

Chinese painting allies delicacy of technique with equal delicacy of suggestiveness. To the Chinese eye, clarified by the tradition of ages, a mist-capped mountain is both mountain and mist and a subtle reminder of the development of all life and its qualities (including beauty)

and activities (including art) from the interaction of heaven and earth: the condensing of the mists of the celestial realm around the summits of the substantial. After this manner was built up, as Raphael Petrucci says in *Chinese Painters*, "a complete system of allusions . . . in close touch with nature, investing her with a vibrant life, in which human consciousness vanishes, making way for the dawning consciousness of infinitude." Laurence Binyon, developing the idea that beauty exists in relationship (the relationship of features to face, of face to body, of one form or colour to another), says that Chinese art carries relationship on to man with nature: "The winds of the air have become his desires, and the clouds his wandering thoughts; the mountain-peaks are his lonely aspirations, and the torrents his liberated energies." *(The Flight of the Dragon.)*

This is a simple psychological parallelism. Mr. Binyon gives us also a hint of an element in the expression of beauty at which we have given only a side glance in passing references to "consecration" and "discipline" in relation to the artists of India. In any attempt to increase the beauty-expressing capacity of the arts, it is fairly obvious that our attempts will be a failure if we do not have one eye on the art and the other on the character of the artist. Mr. Binyon says: ". . . what gave Greek sculpture, in its ripe perfection, that living charm and mystery in simplicity which make them seem to the ignorant as if they had no secrets, sprang from what no skill can ever imitate—a noble way of feeling, thinking, seeing, a radiant consciousness of human powers poised,

controlled, and harmonised to the nature around them. Their art was in their life. And so, too, in the finest works of the Sung (China) genius there is something past analysis or imitation which belonged to the life of that age, to its humanity, to its poetic grasp of nature as a whole . . ."

The Japanese idea that beauty was the "vital principle that pervaded the universe," according to Okakura *(Ideals of the East)*, gave a certain symbolical element to Japanese art like that of China. Everything meant something, though the meaning was never high or deep. A Japanese painting of the Kano school gives a good average view of the content of Japanese art, to which must be added its loveliness of touch and tincture. The Three Sages, Lao-tse, Confucius and Buddha are standing round a large vessel which contains wine. Each tastes the wine ; and the expression on the face of each is the artist's summary of the sage's doctrine. Buddha says : "The wine of life is bitter ; throw it away." Confucius says : "The wine of life is sour ; I think we can sweeten it." Lao-tse says : "The wine of life is sweet." It was the doctrine of Lao-tse, with its blend of Indian *yoga* (discipline), that became the inspiration of Japanese art, in the transformed presentation of Zen *(dyani)* Buddhism. It reduced the colourful elaboration of classical Buddhist art to perfection of black-and-white. It produced the *Noh* dance-drama and the tea-ceremony with their meticulous attention to perfecting every detail. Unfortunately the modernisation of Japanese character by imitation of Europe and America entered her art, and performed the

double disservice of reducing her own native expression of beauty, and of producing a type of painting that is untrue both to her own genius and to western art.

The foregoing comparative summary of the expression of beauty through the arts has had no historical or evolutionary movement indicated in it. As a matter of fact, notwithstanding the doctrine of evolution, there has always been, in the art-remnants of various civilisations, a silent questioning of evolution. The question is very insistent as one stands in front of a perfect statue by the ancient Greek, Praxiteles. India has recently intensified the question by uncovering piled-up cities and their treasures of art-objects of pre-historic times that, to put it soberly, are as excellent as anything done in our time. An object that I saw brought up, covered with the incrustation of ages, from a deep pit in the excavating of Mohenjodaro, the site in Sind of superimposed cities of the fourth millennium before Christ, yielded a woman's hair-fixture in the form of two ibex-heads designed with perfect appreciation of balance and tooled with exquisite skill—and it had been made by an artificer five thousand years ago.

Yet, for all the oscillating and gyrating of the arts in their efforts, under the limitations of time, place, and personality, to respond to the "increasing purpose" (Tennyson) behind and within life which is the impulse to the "process of objectification," we can, in a broad view of history, detect a psychological movement in the expression of beauty through the arts that falls into certain recognisable phases.

There is the *primitive* or *folk* phase, which is mainly objective, and moulds the immediately available substances of nature to the familiar forms of environment. Yet there is, in the cave-carvings of southern Europe, a striking fidelity to life in the depiction of animals ; and in the recently discovered pre-historic cave-paintings at Hoshangabad in India there is a remarkable expression of human vigour. And there are the *classical* and *romantic* phases to which we have already referred ; original classical expression being a poised assimilation of feeling and idea, which was followed by a predominance of intellect in modern classicism ; romantic art, originally a regional and linguistic term, coming to mean imaginative adventure and a predominance of feeling over thought.

A certain cyclical movement around these phases of expression may be detected in the history of long-lived civilisations, but not, as far as can be judged, in the general evolution of humanity. Just as we have primitive peoples today simultaneously with so-called civilised peoples, and in certain of the alleged civilised peoples have all the indications of primitive atavism ; so we have in the arts, side by side with supreme skill and sophistication, a reversion to primitive outlook and ways of expression. On the island of Bali the art of dance-drama has been carried to the ultimate of expression in technique, though not with the refinement of the Javanese dance-drama : and in a village of Bali a new folk-movement in painting has arisen in which fisher-folk and field-folk are one in vision and method with the hill-folk *(pahari)* of sixteenth century India.

The emergence of Negroid influences in the arts of the United States of America may be interpreted, according to predilection, as either nemesis for enslaving a race, or as an opportunity to drop sophistication and mechanicalism and build up a new national art on bare human foundations.

We have noted already the bifurcation of painting that followed the adoption of oil by Europe. The continuation by Asia of the once universally practised tempera method has kept the frescoes of Ajanta, like the later murals of Beato Angelico, as fresh as when they were painted save where they have been extraneously injured, while many of the masterpieces of oil-painting in Europe have almost reached the point of invisibility through deterioration from within. But there was a psychological bifurcation also that found an affinity in oil or water ; Europe adopting the medium that allowed her to express through the brilliance and dramatic possibilities of oils her urge to action and her preference for the objective and material phases of life ; India retaining the medium whose delicacy allowed her to express her innate aspiration towards the subjective and the ideal. There are, of course, exceptions to these generalisations. Roerich of Russia paints in tempera like an Ajantan or an Italian *primitive* ; Roy Choudhuri of Bengal and Madras paints in oils with classical mastery ; Tami Koume of Japan painted supremely in every method.

In our assessment, therefore, of the expression of beauty in the arts it is not possible to draw a line or set

up a standard of any very precise kind. Dr. Coomaraswamy says that those who wish to study Indian art must "emancipate themselves entirely from the innate European tendency to use Nature as a measuring rod . . ." in style and merit. On the other hand, in the study of European art we shall lose its import and deny ourselves its impartation of beauty if we do not accept its naturalism. Beauty is not a prescription or a patent ; it is not the possession of any race or era or art-form. To understand it intellectually we must study its expression in the arts of all times and regions. But to realise it in its fullness we have to participate in the joy of art-creation.

CHAPTER XII

# THE FULFILMENT OF BEAUTY

In approaching the problem of the fulfilment of beauty, that is, the carrying of beauty into life as a refining social influence and individual release, we shall recognise the modern æsthetical dogmas that beauty is not limited to objects of art, and that art is not all necessarily beautiful. There is beauty in nature as well as in art. There is an art of lying as well as of painting. But we shall do small credit to our intelligence if we fall into mental paralysis before the tyrannical aspect that is sometimes assumed by words, and before the notion that nothing can exist that is not clearly defined. It is true that intellectual *arguing* gets nowhere unless terms are clarified. But æsthetical *experience* either in the creation or contemplation of a work of art is a vital experience, and the collateral *experience* of beauty is its reward. Subservience to definition is here detrimental to reality. We cannot allow ourselves to drift into the facile syllogism that, because there can be beauty without art, and art without beauty, therefore there is no relationship between art and beauty. The poetry of wordless nature does not invalidate the poetry of poetry ; neither does the recognition of "life" in a

dead statue deny life in a living being. It is plain to experience that there is a recognisable activity that may be identified as art-activity, though there are other activities that may be termed artistic. It is equally plain that there are objects that express more fully than others a quality identifiable as beauty, though there are objects not specifically artistic that are in some way beautiful.

We can bring the matter into a fairly accurate and short yet comprehensive statement, as follows: "Beauty receives in the arts and art-crafts an expression that has a specially dynamic influence and direction; and art attains a special quality, power and endurance when it expresses beauty." It is not necessary to repeat here the characteristics associated with beautiful objects. We are now concerned not with ideas of beauty, but with the gaining of some idea of the power that beauty may become in moulding the materials and activities of daily life to the excellence of one or other of its aspects.

On the influences that can be exerted by the arts, we have a good beginning in Plato's report of the idea of Socrates, as given in *The Republic*. Discussing the idea that "good style and harmony and grace and rhythm spring naturally from goodness of nature—not the good nature we politely speak of when we really mean weakness—but from a truly good and beautiful character of mind," characteristics which must "always be the aim of young men who are to fulfil their calling," Socrates says:

> And I suppose the art of design is full of such qualities; and so are all similar crafts, weaving, embroidery and architecture, and the fashioning of other useful things . . . For all these

are graceful or clumsy. And clumsiness and harshness and discord are akin to a vulgar style and a vulgar temper, while their opposites are akin to the opposite, to a steady and noble temper. . . . Then, is it only our poets whom we must order and compel to print the images of noble character in their poems . . . ? Rather we must seek out . . . artists who by their own virtuous nature can divine the true nature of beauty and grace, so that our young men, dwelling in a wholesome region, may profit every way, if every way there strike upon their eyes and ears from works of beauty a breeze, as it were, bringing health from kindly places, and from earliest childhood leading them quietly into likeness and fellowship and harmony with the beauty of reasonableness . . .

In this paragraph is contained the whole case for art in education. It should be memorised by every educationist, and be recited each morning on awakening by every Minister of Education and Director of Public Instruction in India and elsewhere.

A somewhat similar idea of the influence of art, and particularly the art of poetry, is expressed by a writer, John Dennis, whose small work, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, is little read today, but exerted an effect on Shelley's unforgettable *Defence of Poetry*.

As the misery of man proceeds from the discord and those civil jars that are maintained within him, it follows that nothing can make him happy but what can remove that discord, and restore the harmony of the human faculties. So that must be the best and the nobler art which makes the best provision at the same time for the satisfaction of all the faculties, the reason, the passions, the senses. . . . In a sublime and accomplished poem, the reason and passions and senses are pleased at the same time superlatively.

Of the service of beauty in history Emerson, in his essay on "Art," says:

As far as the spiritual character of the period overpowers the artist and finds expression in his work, so far it will retain a

certain grandeur, and will represent to future beholders the Unknown, the Inevitable, the Divine . . . that which is inevitable in the work has a higher charm than individual talent can ever give, inasmuch as the artist's pen or chisel seems to have been held and guided by a gigantic hand to inscribe a line in the history of the human race . . . Thus, historically viewed, it has been the office of art to educate the perception of beauty. We are immersed in beauty, but our eyes have no clear vision . . .

In view of the situation in the world today as between various strata and groups of humanity, with the growing negation of the fundamental characteristics of beauty (unity, design, balance, proportion, rhythmical sequence) it cannot be claimed that art has made a success of its office. The failure, as Emerson indicates, is due to man's lack of capacity to respond to the vision of beauty. But the response, let it be said, must not end with responding. It is only a cultured blindness if it does not translate its vision into the stuff and movement of life. This is the open secret of the passing of Greece and Rome, of the Mauryan and Mughal Empires. They passed because they offended against one or other of the "holy laws" of beauty ; for there is a deep truth underlying Nietzsche's saying that "only as an æsthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified." And this is the acid test of affairs in the world today, when the blindness to beauty in life is so widespread as to threaten an even wider stumbling into the darkness and ugliness of war than what has already happened.

We shall realise that this threat is no mere fancy if we seek out some of the predisposing causes of the nonfulfilment of beauty. In doing so we shall also uncover ways and means towards its fulfilment.

One predisposing influence towards the non-fulfilment of beauty through the arts, as pointed out by Crocé (*Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*), is the separation of art from the general cultural life. This is much the same complaint as Tolstoy's (*What is Art ?*) against the deprivement of the people of participation in art-activity, and the setting up of a false superiority between artists and people.

It is this separation between art and life that has led in our time to the apparent contradiction of the beneficent effects of art-activity, which educationists and physicians have noted, by nations in both hemispheres that have in their past contributed immortalities to the history of art. The contradiction is based on a double error of thought. No nation, as nation, has yet been a complete " æsthetic phenomenon." All that has happened has been the creation of masterpieces by individual artists. These have been given superficial appreciation by the nations in which the artists were born because they have gratified national pride. The test of the depth of appreciation of art comes when hatred and violence, awakened by small groups within the nations, lay bare the not yet outgrown " ape and tiger " elements in unregenerate human nature.

Art in the Socratic sense quoted above can transform the disunity of life, its lack of design, its want of balance, its defective proportions, its spasmodic movements, into the likeness of the essential characteristics of beauty ; and we can prophesy with lamentable assurance the ultimate disappearance of nations, no matter how physically powerful they appear to be, that do not respond to the

full requirements of art. These requirements are not fulfilled in the occasional production of masterpieces, or even in a nation-wide following of tradition. They will only begin to be fulfilled by the nation which realises that life without art is as dead as art without life, and that art, to make life a living reality, must be a universal and continuous experience. When this is achieved, there will be no separation such as Crocé observed between art and life, for all life will be raised to the level of the artistic and beautiful ; and there will be no separation between artists and people such as Tolstoy deplored, for the people will express the divine creative impulse that is in all nature.

A second predisposing influence towards the non-fulfilment of beauty is the falling away in the arts from the idealism that stretches towards the higher and purer aspects of beauty ; and the pursuit of art either as a cold-blooded copying of the external appearances of life in the manner called realism, or as a hot-blooded expression of the lower impulses and desires in human nature.

Two terms are involved in this diagnosis (idealism and realism) that have mixed and erroneous connotations in their general use. Philosophically, idealism is the doctrine that all knowledge is subjective ; that we do not know things as they really are, but only our inner reactions to objects that we infer. Religiously and æsthetically idealism exists "Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection" (Tagore). To the man in the street idealism is moonshine, and the idealist a harmless though amusing moon-worshipper.

Realism began its career in mediæval philosophy as a rebuttal of the doctrine of nominalism, which held that general terms had no relationship, save that of arbitrary usage, with the objects they referred to ; which means that the first meal of the day is no less nourishing (or the reverse) under the arbitrary label of "breakfast" than under the equally arbitrary label of "chota-hazre ;" or that "That flower we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." Realism retorted that objects perceived as external are real objects, not subjective imaginations.

Much the same distinction is retained in the æsthetical use of the terms. Idealism expresses itself imaginatively : it endeavours to embody in its created objects some hints of perfection, and excludes as irrelevant, even obnoxious, any expression of ugliness. Realism, on the contrary, resents any intrusion of imagination, and seeks, it declares, to express or portray "naked truth ;" and it is keenly interested in ways of doing things, that is, artistic technique.

Both idealism and realism, as generally thought of, involve a mutual deficiency in the exclusiveness of the one towards the other. To the extent that idealism concerns itself with the relatively permanent things of life —with aspiration, intuition, imagination, and the higher mind—those things that liberate the consciousness from the dictatorship of its physical agents into the aristo-democracy of the spirit, it may be regarded as of greater importance than realism. Realism concerns itself with the objective things in life, which, by their intimacy with

time and space, partake of the transiency of the latter, and by their preoccupation with the modes and implements of expression, and the relatively lower things of life, tend to reduce the consciousness to servitude under its own agents.

But when idealism turns itself outwards towards expression, when it immerses itself in the successively denser strata of feeling, thought, succession, design, language verbal or artistic, and instrumentality, it cannot retain its idealistic purity, for its expression must take on the inevitable limitations of its media. It is in order that the limitations of expression—limitations of definiteness as well as of indefiniteness—may be surmounted, that the utterances of vision and intuition have to be interpreted and reinterpreted ; that the Sermon on the Mount has to be followed by the Epistles and Commentaries, and the Vedas by the Upanishads and Puranas. Neither can expressive idealism ignore the available media of expression and their natural limitations, otherwise it would not find expression. Idealism cannot exist without realism.

On the other hand, realism can have no relationship to reality while it seeks to live without the imagination and the higher experiences of consciousness. The attempt to eliminate everything but direct perception of objects cannot make even a beginning in the visual arts, sculpture and painting, since we literally " walk by faith," faith in experience that enables us to correct the upside-down and inside-out retinal pictures, and through an incalculable number of inferences put the world in its proper position. This is a subjective experience. A purely objective

thing is an impossibility: realism cannot exist without idealism.

Further, to lay undue emphasis on technique is to make a disproportion as between what is expressed and how it is expressed. If any weighting of the scales is allowable at all, it should be in favour of the inner realities of expression, not the external symbols. Emphasis on technique means undue attention to rules and regulations, and through the intrusion of technical abstractions negatives any claim to real objectivity. Objects created under such conditions—and modern art is largely of this kind—are not, Professor C. J. Ducasse says, "the objectification of artistic feeling, but in truth only the objectification of a recipe. . . . When we hear much mention of 'technically very fine painting,' it is salutary not to forget that there can be also such a thing as a technically very fine murder." *(Philosophy of Art.)*

The arts in India have never moved far from idealism. Mughal art in its prime, in architecture plus decoration, and in painting, though it renounced religious themes, had a respect, amounting to devotion, for delicacy and dignity, and was thus æsthetically idealistic.

Buddhist architecture and painting had the same dignity, though not the same æsthetical exquisiteness, as Mughal art; and it extended its reach towards a fuller idealism in its delineation of the personal attainment of spiritual illumination and liberation.

Hindu art, in all its phases, has added to the range of Mughal and Buddhist art a psychological and cosmic stretch that gives it the rank of the most inclusive art of

humanity. So all-embracing is it, indeed, that it has included within its iconographical idealism a realism in the depiction of certain aspects of human life that is sometimes too frank for even those who are accustomed to the pre-war reserve of the American talkie and the London monthly magazine cover!

But Indian art developed also a consciousness of the use of its productions in the stimulating of personal and social idealism. The temple arts, even in their "realistic" phases, were used as means of development of the idealistic side of human nature. They presented cosmic ideas in deific figures which, in addition to their theological appeal to Hindu devotion, embodied principles of universal import. They delineated incidents that may be treated as allegory and interpreted into psychological experience, literally "sermons in stones." But, in addition to the mass use of art, Indian æsthetics advocated the use of pictures for the higher development of the individual both as individual and social unit. In the *Vishnudharmottaram* (an æsthetical appendix to the *Vishnu Purana*) it is laid down that a good picture can be used for the fulfilment of one's *dharma* (duty) and the attainment of *moksha* (liberation). That is to say, the contemplation of a picture expressing a worthy idea or admirable feeling will gradually call the same idea or feeling out of latency into consciousness, and ultimately make it dynamic in the individual's life, and thus subtly elevate the tone and capacity of the individual's discharge of duty to the family, the municipality, the nation, or humanity at large. Simultaneously with this social transformation, the

individual will experience a parallel transformation of inner desire and taste ; for the companionship of an object that speaks beautifully in any of the accents of beauty, spiritual, æsthetical or intellectual, will release the individual who looks on it purposively from the bondage of ugliness, with its attachments to its instruments, into the freedom of beauty in feeling, thought, and action.

Other cultures have set high value on the use of art as the expressor of beauty. The expectant mothers of ancient Greece looked with intent on the sculptured representations of the Olympians in the hope that their coming children might look like Gods. Modern America uses arts and crafts in the treatment of juvenile delinquency ; and advanced educators in various parts of the world are doing the same not only for the curing of delinquency but for its eradication by the inclusion of creative activity as an integral element in school education ; a substitute adventure in creation for the adventures in destruction that youth will make just so long as education does not provide it with the incentive and opportunity and materials for satisfying its inherent but frustrated creativeness. But it is to the credit of India that, in the evaluation of the use of art just mentioned, she has given to humanity the loftiest, most inclusive, and most effective formula for the fulfilment of beauty and for the attainment of a true and beautiful responsiveness to the idealistic impulses behind life.

It may be well to say here, that in all such considerations, involving references to authors past and present by way of substantiation and illustration of our

thesis, no special value is attached to the old or the new as such. Ancient and modern are the Janus faces of one experience that is forever new to the percipient, though as old as humanity.

> When you return, the youngest of the seers,
> Released from fetters of ancestral pose,
> There will be beauty waiting down the years,
> Re-visions of the ruby and the rose.

That is how an American poetess of nine, Nathalia Crane, expressed her response to the eternal contemporaneousness of beauty. Re-visions will naturally come in adaptations of the outer appearances of things to changed ways of looking at them. The unchanging thing is the ruby that outwears all crowns and rings, and the rose that survives the garden of Sadi and the vases of ancient Greece.

Emerson speaks up for modernity in his essay on "Art," where he says:

> Beauty will not come at the call of a legislature, nor will it repeat in England or America its history in Greece. . . . It is in vain that we look for genius to reiterate its miracles in the old arts; it is its instinct to find beauty and holiness in new and necessary facts. . . Proceeding from a religious heart, it will raise to a divine use the railroad, the insurance office, the joint-stock company, our law, our primary assemblies, our commerce, the galvanic battery, the electric jar, the prism, and the chemist's retort, in which we seek now only an economical use. . .

Emerson is here thinking of the creations of beauty by genius. But a much more basic and everlasting and universal way of looking at beauty and art is not as special manifestations of genius, but as a right of every human being, no matter how far removed from the

category of genius; the right to have the opportunity of becoming artistic, though not necessarily of becoming professional artists, just as everyone has the right to be given the opportunity to become literate, though not necessarily to become litterateurs.

It is notable for its significance, though it is natural to Emerson, that his modernity, as expressed in the foregoing quotation, proceeds from "a religious heart." In the same essay he has said that "as soon as beauty is sought, not from religion and love, but from pleasure, it degrades the seeker." Behind this statement there is the principle that has been already referred to, the principle that the satisfaction of the lower pleasures attaches the individual to the organs of satisfaction, and thus degrades him, whereas the satisfaction of the higher pleasures, such as are derived from true religious activity and true love, sets the individual free from lower desires. This is ultimately the most searching test of the fulfilment of beauty. AE applies it in a more abstract sense in his poem, "Time Spirits," in which he tells the American poetry of ten years ago that undue attention to the present is one sure way of missing the attention of the future. In plain prose, his criticism is that much of the poetry then being written in America did not go to nature for its inspiration, or seek to express spiritual illumination, but wrote in an artificial sky-scraper world and an atmosphere of petrol fumes. The criticism did not cover the whole of American poetry; but the apposite point is that the poet's own lines, in their rhythm, music and figures of speech, are a demonstration of the service of

beauty in verbal expression, in which even the charge of the desertion of beauty is suffused with some subtle suggestion of the very beauty that has been renounced. Listen to the first ten lines of a longish poem.

> I do not chide them that they fly the wood,
> Hill, river, lake, remote and endless shore,
> Nor pluck jewels of words out of the light,
> But seek their song under those cliffs of stone,
> And stone-grey air that reels dizzy with mist.
> They think if they but watch their world they will
> Be master of it, their speech recall today
> Unto tomorrow. They do not know that time
> Forgets its hours, its days, its years, and all
> But that which has some touch of the timeless on it.

A third predisposing influence towards the non-fulfilment of beauty through the arts in life is the modern commercialising of certain of them as publicity allurements to sense-gratification and the cultivation of luxuriousness. Emerson, in the passage already quoted, listed certain modern expedients in which, in his time two generations ago, only an "economical use" was sought. Since then the Occident has attempted to make an artistic, as well as an economical, use of modern mechanical inventions, by making them subjects of poetry, music, sculpture and painting. This recognition of the æsthetical potentialities of modern inventions probably began with Tennyson's oblique and mistaken reference to railways as running in "ringing grooves." Since then, every addition to the "gadgets" of sensuous life has been made either the direct subject or an illustrative expedient of English and Occidental verse. European and American painting and sculpture have reacted somewhat similarly ;

and even architecture, in certain buildings labelled "modernistic," has aped the appearance of steamers and engine-rooms. In this and in other ways the special power of the arts has been used, not in its high service of the annunciation of the creative spirit in humanity, but as an infective agent of the debilitating suggestion that humanity's destiny is to become a slave to its own fabrications.

But not only has art thus made a more than adequate compensating movement away from the merely economical use of modern things, to which Emerson referred; it has even been reduced to the humiliation of acting as a pander to human vanity, greed and sensuality by being used in the always excessive and frequently mendacious effort to make people spend their small supply of money on things for which they have no real need. When excess and falsehood are given a spurious elevation in being tricked out in the appearances of beauty, they are capable of exerting a much more serious influence towards moral and intellectual ugliness and debasement than "plain unvarnished" lies.

In the unsophisticated youth of the race, its imagination gave personality to the powers of nature, and created the primitive Pantheons of Deities of sun and moon, light and dark, mountain and ocean; and through these expressed its innate reverence for larger manifestations of universal life than were within its own possibility. Since then, man has captured the sun and leashed the lightning; but while he has put his power over certain operations of nature to wonderful and admirable uses, he

has also degraded it to uses that would scandalise a decent savage. From a window in the sun-room of the exquisite Master Building in New York, twenty-seven storeys from the ground, I received every night a lesson, in electric light a mile away, as to how to uncork, decant and drink a useless fluid. That sky-signal over a vast city seemed to be a symbol of a spiritual degradation that contained a sinister threat against human progress ; for those who are capable of utilising power for gain through stimulating unnecessary and mainly deleterious appetites in their fellows, are capable also of inflicting destruction and death on them in pursuit of any end that they may deem sufficient excuse for exercising their power over the forces of nature.

In a European country I saw a figure of the Lord Buddha used to advertise a dressing for the hair. I joined others in organising a protest against so base a misuse of the figure of the Lord of Illumination to whom incalculable millions of people in Asia have for centuries turned their aspiration and devotion. But a protest of such a nature is liable to be met with the retort that Indians themselves use deific figures in advertising their wares. In an Indian restaurant I saw two coloured reproductions after the manner of Ravi Varma, but mixing up facsimiles of packets of soap with the figure of the Goddess of the household, Sri Lakshmi Devi. It is true that the God-sense in India is universal and all-pervasive, as is the idea of the offering of all life's activities to the service of the higher ; but the diminution of the ancient sense of conjoint human obligation *(dharma)* and the imitation of

the worst features of foreign business methods, especially in pornography in advertising which needs no lessons from other countries in degradation, have reduced the sincerity of deific invocation in Indian business life. The insensitiveness that can tolerate sacrilege in mere commercial touting, and can tolerate the degradation of art from its true creative purpose that India of all countries set the highest, as quoted above from the *Vishnudharmottaram*, ought to be a matter of grave concern to the educational authorities of the country, and a weighty argument for bringing art-activity into mass education in order to rear a generation so full of reverence for the divine power of creation in art that it will have the natural taste and intelligence to make such things impossible. This, the bringing of art into mass education, has for many years seemed to me to be one of the speediest and surest ways towards the attainment of a life worthy of the high capacities of humanity, of which capacities, happily, we have had enough demonstration in the course of human history, inartistic though its lurid record appears, to prevent complete pessimism as to the future of the race.

Aesthetical teleology, that is, the study of ultimates in art and beauty, points towards the fulfilment of beauty through the arts in life. The elevation of life, the building of "Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land," the implementing of idealism in "the daily round, the common task," the organisation of society on the basis of "the unity of life and the community of its forms," these are but expressional variants of an underlying effort to make life artistic—economically artistic, socially artistic,

physically artistic, culturally artistic. Such an effort is integral in human necessity, and must ultimately be successful despite obstruction and deflection; and its agents must be in full affinity with its purpose, they must themselves be "æsthetic phenomena" (Nietzsche).

We recall the idea of Socrates that artists must be found artistically fitted to surround the young men (who would be the leaders in the proposed Republic) with reminders of beauty and incentives to it in character and conduct. In this, Greek and Vedantic thought are at one in their recognition of the influence of the arts on humanity and its institutions: we remember the teaching of the *Vishnudharmottaram* regarding the use of a good painting as a means to fulfilling one's duty and achieving liberation into one's higher nature. But the incongruity of slavery in Greece and of group exclusiveness in India, despite the eternal verities that each expressed in its highest thought, prevented the fulfilment of their vision of the high uses of art. The limitation in Grecian life is seen in the very idea of choosing artists to conform to an intellectually seen formula of a particular type of human organisation.

Perhaps the most serious flaw in the Socratic application of art to the influencing of psychological conditions (a matter brought to the perfection of degradation in modern advertising) was the restriction of its service, in a so-called "Republic," to "young rulers;" for the divisions between them and the people, and also the women, of Greece, would tend to cancel the "fellowship and harmony" intended to be inculcated by carefully chosen

artists, through inducing a cultural priggishness which is one of the least artistic of human characteristics.

In order to meet the needs of our time, we have to better the exclusiveness of the "Republic," though we cannot better its method : indeed, India has not yet begun even to try either this or the parallel Upanishadic use of pictures in the development of artistic character, individual and social. The Indian States and Provinces, though their individual members enjoy music, have shown little of the sagacity of the ancient kings in China who put music into the education of the people because of its power to purify the mind. Some day Indian educational authorities will do so on a scale adequate to the need ; and when they do, they will be wise to bear in mind (as educators the world over should bear in mind) the hint of Confucius on the relationship between virtue and music as an important point in educational technique. Confucius said that a man who did not possess the human virtues had nothing to do with music. The aphorism is true in two directions. A musician or teacher of music who lacks the human virtues, is liable, positively, to turn the emotional potency of music into the stimulation of sentimentality and over-sensuousness, or, negatively, for want of higher sympathies, to neutralise the power of music both to raise " a mortal to the skies " and to draw " an angel down." In the other direction, the choice of music to be used in education is a matter calling for keen judgement, in view of the power of music to add a special intensity to normal feeling and thinking, and thus to increase the possibilities of both good and evil in the character and

action of the individual. And what applies to music and character applies to all the arts in some measure.

As a concluding general consideration, I believe that the two most threatening features of life today in the world at large are the falling away of reverence and the slackening of discipline. In the Christian world it has taken five centuries to bring the reaction from the millennium of religious mediævalism to its fullest expression. In the Vedic world the reaction from circumstances roughly similar to those of the "Dark Ages" of Europe has only recently begun, but is moving at an ever accelerating pace as increased facilities for cultural invasion bring both challenge to and allurement away from traditional modes of thought, feeling and conduct. It is characteristic of such reactions that they have little time and less inclination to look into the implications of impulse. They cast away religion because certain historical creedal modes and institutions have not been prophetic enough to adapt themselves to enlarging knowledge: they renounce strict morality because certain of its inhibitions have become irksome to a growing sense of freedom. But this, to those who realise that the hunger of the spirit is at least as real as the hungers of the body, and that all life moves within essential law, is as unwise as giving up eating because some foods have become distasteful, or demolishing a house because it has restraining walls between its liberating doors.

But when such crises arise out of the depths of human nature, argument is of no more avail than lecturing on the inconsiderateness, not to mention the dangers, of

seismic upheaval to an erupting volcano ; and suppression is only calculated to aggravate matters, even as compression can turn the mild and beneficent air into a devastating explosive. The days of enforced reverence for religions have passed : Europe has, indeed, entered on a phase of enforced irreverence. The new Humanism seems to be but the usual substitution of one objective for another. Life without something of enlargement of desire beyond bodily satisfactions can only become an articulate animalism ; and without discipline can only relapse into savagery.

I believe that humanity has in universal participation in creative art-activity the most effective means of bringing into life the sense of enlargement, the glimpse of perfection, the touch of universality, that transforms apparently insignificant things into hieroglyphs and codes of illuminating and inspiring and purifying revelation and discovery and achievement. Such activity, which yields up its joy to the participant under accepted inevitable laws governing each particular art-form, produces in the participant a parallel understanding of the laws of individual and social life, and, by reducing egoistic deflections away from creative purpose, as well as by increasing responsiveness and effectiveness, makes the individual a much more accessible receiver and communicator of the Will behind Life that is forever seeking instruments for its fulfilment.

# INDEXES

## GENERAL

## BOOKS QUOTED FROM

Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, The, John Dennis, 190.
Aesthetical Principles, H. B. Marshall, 148.
Aesthetic as Science and General Linguistic, Benedetto Crocé, 96, 192, 193.
Apocrypha of the Old Testament, 27, 28.

Beautiful, The, H. B. Marshall, 148.
Bhagavad Gita, The, 118.
Bible, The, 3, 4, 9.
Biography, John Masefield, 65.
Birth of Drama, The, F. Neitzsche, 191, 205.

Chinese Painters, Raphael Petrucci, 182.
Collected Poems, J. H. Cousins, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22-24, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36-39.
Critical History of Modern Aesthetics, A, Earl of Listowel, 138, 148.

Defence of Poetry, A, P. B. Shelley, 190.

Essays, Francis Bacon, 142, 143, 145.
Essays, John Stuart Mill, 91.
Education of the Whole Man, The, L. P. Jacks, 126-129.
Enneads, Plotinus, 141, 142, 147.

Flight of the Dragon, The, Laurence Binyon, 175, 182.

Heart of Hinduism, The, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, 131.
Hippias Major, Socrates, 138.
House of the Titans, The, AE, 153, 200, 201.

Ideals of the East, Okakura Kakuzo, 183.
Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, The, Bernard Shaw, 133.

## ARTISTS REFERRED TO